
SIGISMAR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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SIGISMAR.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF VILLEROY.

See thyself, devil!
Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman.

—SHAKESPEARE.

I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke—.

POPE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES



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LETTER XXIX.

Newgate.

WILLIAM LESLEY, ESQ. TO THE HONOUR-
ABLE CHARLES MACKENZIE.

My dear Charles,

HAD it been possible, for you to have remained a stranger to my present unhappy situation, I should not have dated this from a place which I know will alarm and shock you ; but the cause of my confinement is of too serious a nature to admit of conceal-

ment; I will therefore proceed to give you a circumstantial account, of not only my offence, but of the events which concurred to make me guilty of it.

My last letter informed you of my resolution not to leave town; it likewise acquainted you with my endeavours to meet Lady Vernon; but as I saw no possibility of success, after several days of unceasing trial; I resolved to give up the attempt, and repair to you; of this, I would not give you intelligence, because I wished to surprize you.

Having settled every thing for my departure, I waited on Lord C——, to thank him for his civility, and to take my leave; I had not frequented his house from the time of my writing you of my determination to quit London, the following day; and I now chose an hour when I hoped to have seen his Lordship only, but in this I

was

was disappointed ; for I found him with his lady, who, on my telling the errand I came on, declared I should not leave town till after the masquerade, which was to take place in two days, as Lord C — would not go, and she had set her heart on my being her cecisbeo for that night. I acquiesced, though, to confess the truth, the office was unpleasing to me ; as I some time before had reason to believe your conjectures, regarding her ladyship's favorable sentiments towards me, were not entirely without foundation : since which, I had avoided her desirable society. Her conduct at this time, however, lulled my suspicions ; as she expressed no regret at my approaching absence, nor a wish to detain me longer than the abovementioned day.

I remarked, during my visit, that her behaviour was less particular to me, and more attentive to others, than had been

usual; but early the following morning, I received a note, addressed to me in these words.

DEAR LESLEY,

“ Do not, if you can possibly avoid it, see either my lord or myself, till after the masquerade ; where you must join me in the room ; I will then relate a circumstance to you, which will astonish, but I hope not displease you ; I shall assume the character of a nun ; but, to prevent the possibility of a mistake ; I will bear on my hand a scrawl, on which shall be written, ‘ the unwilling victim ;’ I charge you as you value my future repose, not to fail this appointment, and that you will submit to my guidance for the evening ; come early, and believe me, all you would wish,

BRIDGET C——.”

Upon my honor Charles, I do not know whether sorrow, or surprize was most pre-

predominant in me on this occasion ; for I had little doubt, as to the subject on which she meant to converse ; and I most sincerely regretted, that I had been so deceived in my opinion of her delicacy, and character: I however, obeyed her directions, and repaired to the pantheon, at so early an hour, that the company was but thin. I soon discovered her I would have given the world to have avoided. At my entrance, she separated from the rest of the company, and seated herself in a distant corner, where I joined her, when, in a low voice, she said, “ Lesley, we must neither of us be known ; it is of consequence we should not, therefore be on your guard ; I assured her I would, and begged her to explain her mysterious conduct ? She answered, it is for that purpose, and with that intent I meet you ; but, you must first answer me the questions I shall put to you, and I conjure you to answer them with truth ; without waiting my

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reply,

reply, she proceeded : “ were you ever attached to Miss Howard, that is the present Lady Vernon ? ” I instantly replied, “ most fervently, and that previous to her marriage with his lordship, I had esteemed her as the future companion of my life ; that I had every right to do so ; as we had mutually engaged to live for each other. She asked what could tempt me to break that engagement ? I told her worlds would not have tempted me, but a fortune and title, were more than Miss Howard could withstand ; she therefore forsook me, cruelly forsook me : without deigning to explain her motives, or even suffering me to plead for a mitigation of her severity ; her door was shut against my entrance, and my letters remained unanswered. She expressed great surprize at what I had mentioned ; saying, she had never till that moment, heard of my having made the smallest effort to regain Miss Howard’s good opinion : but she continued,

ed, you cannot be ignorant that I am looked on as the cause of your breaking with her; or that a supposition of your attachment to me, was her inducement for marrying Lord Vernon? I assured her, I had never entertained an idea of the kind; that it was not possible I should; as I had never presumed to think of the wife of the valued lord C——; but as a being, too far removed from me, to be viewed in any light, but as an object of veneration.

She was silent for some time, and I was applauding myself, for having prevented her discovering sentiments, which must have rendered me the object of her contempt, or of my own; when she again addressed me, saying, “I wish Lesley, you would be ingenuous, and inform me whether you still retain your regard for Lady Vernon, and whether it would not be possible for another to supplant her in your heart?” I was confounded, and

knew not what to answer ; there was something so brutal, in avowing my real sentiments to her, that I could not prevail on myself to do it ; yet, to deceive her, could not serve a good purpose, and might ultimately lead to both our destructions. I hesitated ; at this moment, a monk in the habit of a friar approached, and placing himself on the other side of her ; desired he might be her father-confessor ; and, as the first proof of obedience, he demanded to know, if it was not to my company she was an unwilling victim ; as in that case, he would shortly rid her of it.

She replied, his words denoted more the knight errant, than the man of peace ; she would therefore advise him to engage a windmill ; though, that would be less quixotish, than the attempt to fulfil his present office ; he said, “ a faint heart, never won a fair lady ;” therefore, he only waited her commands, when he would execute

execute them, though he suspected the Domino concealed a cloven foot. She laughing said, "good lord, Mr. Sancho! I crave your pardon, I took you for the mad knight himself, till your proverb discovered you were only the squire; but, surely you are got a little out of your element; as deeds of valour were never related among your squireships exploits; and your choice of character evinced, you thought yourself better calculated to forbear, than fight." He answered, if she would entitle him to fight for her, she should see his present appearance to be hypocritical, as he would die in her defence. Oh, dear, said she, "what will the world say?" I would not wish to make your wife jealous: "how do you know I have one?" replied the mask, "by signs which your visor cannot conceal," returned her ladyship; then rising from her seat, she continued, "good night," Sancho, I see one coming this way I wish to avoid. Who is

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it can be so unfortunate?" asked the friar: "I will," said she, "pay that respect to the habit, which I do not feel for the wearer, and confess the person I would wish to escape from is that fool Lord Vernon, who is trifling away his time in this place, while his new made lady is more profitably employed at home." "It is strange," said the mask, "to observe how people differ: here is Lady C—— at a masquerade, flaunting it with a gallant, while her gentle mate is engaged at home painting a head with antlers, to which he has given his own likeness so strikingly, that her ladyship has begged it may ornament her dressing-room, as she cannot then forget his lordship."

Here he was interrupted by his antagonist's saying, "I do assure you, you are mistaken, Mr. Governor, in the latter part of your information, as I know, to a certainty, his lordship intends the head as
a present

a present to his friend Lord Vernon ; and an intimate acquaintance of mine has engaged to furnish it with horns that not even time will have power to fade.

A devil, which I had observed several times near us, now approached, and asked the friar if he had any commands for him ? who replied, none ; but there was a lady ready to engage him : the devil answered, he had long served her ladyship, and was still willing : she answered, he was a good-natured devil, and deserved employment ; she would therefore reward him if he would rid her of that tedious blockhead, of whom not only his highness would, (though there was inclination on one side, and diligence on the other) be able to make any thing.

So saying, she took my arm and led me away, when she informed me the person she had so long conversed with was Lord Ver-

non himself. Shocked at the information, I angrily enquired, what could tempt her to speak wantonly of the innocent Lady Vernon to her husband, to a man which the world already said she was unhappy with: she was going to reply, when he who personated the devil, again accosted her, saying he could find no kindred mind in the whole company except herself; he should therefore remain with her: and accordingly followed us wherever we went, intruding his jests, which passed unnoticed; my companion being lost in thought, and I was too much dissatisfied and uneasy to be capable of wit.

The crowd was now become very great, and, for a moment, we had lost sight of our tormentor, when her ladyship stopping me suddenly, said, "Lesley, leave me, and go instantly to your lodgings; I will contrive to follow you, when I will account for my conduct this morning, and like-

wise unfold a secret which will astonish you."

I attempted to remonstrate on the imprudence of such a step, but she prevented me, saying, "it is in vain, Lesley! I run no hazard; my dress will conceal me, and my everlasting happiness depends on your being made acquainted with what I have to disclose. You leave town to-morrow; therefore quit me now, and let not suspicion taint your mind against me, for I mean by this interview to regain, and not forfeit your good opinion." She turned from me, and I reluctantly obeyed her command: on my chair being set down, I saw her's was close by, and we went to my apartment together, when, taking off her mask, she said, "Thus, Lesley, I acquit Lady C—— of having injured Lady Vernon!" Good God, Charles! it was Lady Vernon herself!

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amazement tied my tongue, and she proceeded:

“Now, William, it is necessary I should do justice to that lady, by telling you, that the note you received, desiring you to meet her at the masquerade, was written by me! I will now confess my motive: I had been seduced into a marriage with Lord Vernon, by having the idea instilled into me, of your having abandoned me, and attached yourself to Lady C——. Since my return to London, I have had some reason to think you had been wronged, and that I had fallen the victim to artifice; to be either assured of which, or have your perfidy confirmed, was of infinite consequence to me; and, for that purpose, I contrived the meeting of this evening, hoping from the similarity of our figures, and my talent in imitating voices, I might pass on you for her ladyship

ship, in which I have succeeded, and but a few words were necessary to inform me I had been cruelly deceived. From that moment my soul could not have known rest till I had vindicated myself to you: therefore tell me, Lesley, if your heart acquits me of having meanly bartered honest love for the wretched reward of titled misery? It will be some alleviation of my distress to know you do not despise me; this night may perhaps be the last of our ever meeting; it is best it should be so; it will be for my peace, and Lord Vernon's honour: for oh, William, I will not conceal from you that you still possess my inmost soul, and that in losing you I have been robbed of all which I have desired to live for. This confession prudence would have dictated to me to withhold, but when have I obeyed her precepts? Was it when I listened to the ruinous advice of my cruel aunt?"

Here

Here I interrupted her, saying, "Rather to the falsehood of a villain! Alas, Matilda! my only consolation is now that I have discovered the wretch who has destroyed my peace, and he shall feel my vengeance!"

"Stop!" she hastily replied, "stop, William, I conjure you, whilst I exculpate Lord Vernon from any part in the artifice which has undone us; for, from my soul I believe he is entirely innocent; if he is not, I am sure he is sufficiently punished in the wife he has obtained, and sincerely repents of his part of the fraud; but I believe he does not know any has been practised. Wrapped up in his own consequence, he did not think it possible he could be any other than the object of affection: my person was all he sought, but he finds, too late, it is of no value when unaccompanied by the heart, and that he has discernment sufficient to know
he

he does not possess, nor ever can; for, had I one to give, with sorrow I declare, Lord Vernon is the last man I have ever seen who would obtain it. After this, need I urge you, William, to drop your resentment to this unfortunate man; do not give him further reason to curse the hour that joined his fate with mine. If you cannot pity him, you will pay some regard to the fame of your once loved Matilda, and to the peace of your venerable friend whose undeserving daughter she is."

At this moment a noise on the stairs warned us of the approach of some one, and I, too late, recollected my having neglected to give orders to be denied. The affrighted Lady Vernon had but time to shut herself into my adjoining bed-room, when her brother, who had been on a visit to her for some days, entered! I received him in the utmost confusion,

confusion, but of which, being heated with wine, he took no notice: I told him, as the best means of removing him, and giving his sister an opportunity to return home, that I was that moment going back to the masquerade, and asked him to accompany me, to which he consented: but before we could execute our purpose, I was astonished by the unceremonious entrance of Colonel Conway; he was followed by his brother Lord C——, who, setting up a loud laugh, and pointing to Mr. Howard, asked the Colonel if that was the lady? Then turning to me, his lordship said, “Faith, Lesley, I have to beg your pardon for this intrusion, but I was compelled by this hot-headed, obstinate brother, who has, for this month past, been labouring to fill me with suspicions of your too great intimacy with Lady C——, and has actually, this night, by the force of imagination, converted this gentleman into her ladyship, and brought
me

me here to be a witness of my own dishonour."

I darted a furious look at the Colonel, and asked if he had dared to hold such language? he said he had; and was, in spite of my angry brow and big voice, still so presuming, as not only to say, but insist that Lady C—— had agreed to follow me home from the Pantheon; that she had done so, and that she had not yet left the house.

Lord C—— prevented my speaking by enquiring of Mr. Howard how long he had been with me, and if he found me alone? to which he answered, he had entered the moment before his lordship, and that I was then alone. Lord C—— then turned to me: "Prithee, Lesley, has any female been to visit you this evening?" In my perplexed situation I was tempted to tell a falsehood, by assuring him

him none had ; and added, “ since your lordship doubts my honour, it is time our friendship ceased.” He held out his hand, saying, “ I beg your pardon, my valued friend, I am convinced.”

At this instant his brother, darting to a table, held up, in triumph, the nun’s mask and gloves, which her evil destiny had caused her to leave there, and mine had prevented my observing.

Behold !” he exclaimed, “ behold the man of honour !—no female has visited him !—Mark, my credulous brother ; these are not the decorations of a female, nor is this the very mask I have described to you ! Away, my lord, for shame with unmanly passiveness ! Search the villain’s apartments, and drag forth the wanton.”

With this he rushed towards the door which concealed the poor Matilda, but I, seizing my sword which hung in the room, placing

placed myself before the entrance, and solemnly protested the first that approached was a dead man; at the same time, I assured Lord C—— he was greatly wronging his guiltless lady: with some difficulty, he, with the assistance of Mr. Howard, restrained Colonel Conway from attempting to force his way, but he at length prevailed. Then, addressing himself to me, he said, “I am at a loss what degree of credit to give to your assertions; you have once this night imposed on me a falsehood; what you now say may be truth, but whether it is so or not, the events of this evening have filled my mind with suspicion which will embitter my future days, as, from this hour, I shall distrust the honour of Lady C——: true, it is now in my power to put an end to the torture of suspense, by compelling you to satisfy my doubts; but, I confess, the terror lest these doubts should be confirmed,

firmed, prevents me; I therefore leave you."

Before he was out of the room, the door I had defended opened, and the generous Matilda came forth with an air of dignity, and a voice sweet and commanding, she called to him, "Return, my lord, and be convinced of the wrong you would do your innocent lady!" To have avoided this discovery, I would have given my life, but my soul is incapable of the baseness, the meanness of concealing my own shame, by rendering the character of another suspected!

Oh, Charles! neither pen or pencil could do justice to this scene! Of the whole group, she was by far the most collected. Observing the almost stupified astonishment of Mr. Howard, and turning to him, she continued: "To you, my brother,

brother, I would fain account, for the improper situation in which you find me; yet, though I know the purity of my own intentions, appearances are so strong against me, that I am hopeless of obtaining your belief."

Lord C—— now turning to the Colonel, imprecated a bitter curse on his meddling disposition, and bid him retire; who, shrugging up his shoulders, said, "Why, who the devil, my lord, would have expected such a *denuement*!" and left the room. The ridicule his manner implied, roused my indignation, and I followed him: his carriage was in waiting, and had drove off before I could overtake him. I hurried after, and saw him stop at the Countess of N——'s. I could entertain no doubt as to the intention of this late visit; and the idea that he was exposing my exalted Matilda
to

to her relation, encreased my rage almost to frenzy.

On reaching the house, I desired Colonel Conway might be informed a gentleman must speak with him instantly. My appearance made the servant hesitate, as I was without a hat, and carried in my hand the drawn sword I had unsheathed at my lodgings; but, on my commands being repeated, I was shewn into a room where he soon came to me, and meaning to make a jest of what had happened, he addressed me with an affected penitential countenance, saying, "That was a cursed mal-a-propos visit of mine, Mr. Lesley; upon my soul I am *au desesper* at what I have done! But how was I to know that you was the favourite of every fine woman of fashion in town? Faith I am at a loss whether I ought to cut your throat or my own: I envy your good fortune, you
lucky

lucky dog, as much as I am vexed at my own ill-timed blunder."

Rage and want of breath had kept me silent: I now told him I had come for satisfaction for the irreparable injury he had done me. He laughed heartily, and begged, in the name of all that was wonderful, I would say what the injury was? Could his having discovered that I was the chosen friend of Lord Vernon's lady (the most beautiful woman in the world) be termed such? if it was, he should be prodigiously happy to be so injured. "But," he continued, "I see you are angry, Mr. Lesley; and though I think it ridiculous in you to be so, I will do all in my power to appease your wrath; to which end I do solemnly assure you, this foolish affair shall be, for me, as though it had never been; and I can answer for Lord C——'s silence, as the moment he returns to his picture gallery, he will forget

he ever had been at your lodgings; Mr. Howard will hardly blab, and her ladyship is not so great a novice at secret keeping, as to betray herself; so that matter is settled." I told him he was mistaken; his not speaking ill of Lady Vernon's character was not sufficient; he must not think disrespectfully of it: he must believe her being at my lodgings was perfectly innocent, and assure me, on his honour, he thought so: these were the only terms we could be friends on.

He looked as if he had doubted my being in earnest, and then replied, with an air and voice of indifference, (at the same time taking out his snuff box and playing with it) "Then, Mr. Lesley, we never shall be friends; for, on my honour, I do not think, finding a lady shut up in a young man's bed-room, in a lodging house, looks like innocence: faith, sir, I would not pay you so ill a compliment as to suppose

pose it possible : so, as I said before, I will forbear, on this occasion, to speak what I think—but egad I will think what I please. If this condescension meets with your approbation, well ; if not, it is also well ! I shall, however, think myself entitled to her ladyship's gratitude for my silence, and live in the hope that she will, in her search after novelty, take an innocent peep into the bed-room of your very humble servant."

He was then going, when I stepped between him and the door, and telling him he was a villain, desired him to defend himself, as I was resolved either his everlasting silence or mine should terminate that meeting. He answered, if it was my wish he would not baulk me ; and, deliberately putting up his snuff-box, and throwing what he had taken out of it from between his finger and thumb, he drew his sword. His contemptuous cool-

ness had increased my passion to frenzy, and I was attacking him with the utmost fury when he called for a moment's pause, as he had a few words to say, and thus proceeded:

“ Before this deadly encounter takes place, it is proper I should know with whom I engage, that if I kill you I may be certain I have not dishonoured myself by it, or if I am killed, that it was not by the hand of a plebeian: therefore tell me, sir, who are you? for your being the favourite of Lady C——, and the seducer of Lady Vernon, is not recommendation sufficient for my putting myself on a level with one whom nobody knows.”

You, Charles, will easily believe this did not serve to allay my rage. I only called to him to defend himself; and, rushing on him, my sword passed through his body, and he fell: his prostrate situation disarmed

disarmed my anger, and I ran to his assistance, in which I was joined by the Countess, who just then entered the room, and entreated her to call for help: finding she did not move, I was going myself, when she called, "Stop, murderer! your attempt to fly from justice is in vain!" Her words recalled me, when the wounded man, with a generosity that his preceding conduct had not led me to expect, said, "Do not prevent him, my dear madam. Fly, sir, for I am dying; but, lest your escape should be prevented, I call this lady to witness to my last words, which are these: That I acquit you of my death, by declaring I deserved it, having wantonly provoked you, and that you have acted as a gentleman, and a man of honour: but fly, I conjure you."

Penetrated by this noble behaviour, I wrung his hand, breathing my fervent wishes for his recovery. I left the house without further opposition, intending, after

I had dispatched a surgeon to the assistance of my unfortunate antagonist, to make the best of my way out of the kingdom. But the recollection of the situation in which I had left the distressed Matilda, determined me to return to my lodgings to learn what had become of her. As I entered, I met her brother, who addressed me with "Villain, seducer, you are well returned!" I assured him I was neither, and begged him to compose himself, and listen to me, when I would convince him that not only I was undeserving his reproach, but likewise his sister was innocent of even intentional guilt. He called me liar and scoundrel, and, presenting a pistol, desired I would defend myself: I took it, and, stepping to the door, threw it into the street. In doing this, my sword, which I had concealed under my coat on account of its being unsheathed, fell; I stooped to take it up, by which I probably avoided falling by the contents of the

the other pistol, as he discharged it at me in the same instant. He now repeated his opprobrious language, adding coward; all which I bore unmoved, the scene I had lately quitted having subdued every spark of resentment which my nature was capable of. My calmness seemed to add to his distraction, for, approaching, he aimed a blow at me with the pistol he held in his hand, to avert which I held up the point of my sword; he endeavoured to catch it, with intent to disarm me, but unhappily, in his great eagerness, his foot slipped, and falling forward, the accursed weapon went through his heart!"

Oh, my friend! words cannot have power to tell the anguish, the bleeding anguish of my soul! I fell senseless by the body: on my return to life, I found myself furrounded by the officers of justice, who conveyed me to this place: they acquainted me I was not charged
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with

with one murder alone, as the Countess of N—— had given information of my having assaulted Colonel Conway at her house that night, and wounded him, of which wounds he had expired.

Thus have I made known to you the situation I am in, and the impossibility of foreseeing events which have concurred to bring me to it—what is to follow I am doubtful of! Of the murder of Mr. Howard I am certain the law will acquit me, as the people at my lodgings were present at the whole transaction, and will bear testimony in my favour: my own heart will also acquit me of intending him the smallest injury, I would I could say as much with respect to Colonel Conway; but my conscience tells me, however favourable my country's decision may be, shall hence forward carry in my bosom an accusing spirit, whose constant and severe reproaches will drive from it the few

few fragments of peace my untoward destiny had left me: this knowledge renders me less anxious as to my chance of acquittal or condemnation. The only chance I have of escaping an ignominious death, is the generous declaration of the dying man to the Countess, of which her testimony will be sufficient proof, and which she will not refuse when called on: for though she has robbed me of all which could make life desirable, she can have no interest in taking that life, therefore will not withhold the only circumstance which can preserve it.

I have not, nor do I intend to inform my father of these unhappy events till after my trial, which comes on in a very few days, as I wish him to remain ignorant of my situation till my fate is decided: this I hope, by his total seclusion from society, and the excessive distance at which he keeps his domestics, may be

accomplished. You will, therefore, take any steps that you may think likely to contribute to this desirable end, as it will save him some days of useless anxiety; for, should the worst happen, his being informed of it could not avail me, and, should I be acquitted, fears for my life will not be added to the keen sense he will have of the disgrace I have brought upon him. Need I tell you, Charles, that your presence, on this awful occasion, will be most acceptable to

Your unhappy Friend,

WILLIAM LESLEY.

LETTER XXX.

MRS. PAULET TO MISS HOWARD.

NO action of my life was ever undertaken with such deep regret as the writing of this letter. Oh, my Emma! no words can paint the reluctance I feel at acquainting you with a circumstance which will, I fear, for ever destroy the peace of your unfortunate beloved family: but the knowledge cannot be withheld, and, if delayed, may reach you from some evil-minded and exaggerated channel. Be it therefore the task of friendship to prevent your being misled, though it is by relating truths that will weigh you down with sorrow.

I was, at two o'clock this morning, alarmed by a servant entering my room

c 6

after

after I was in bed, entreating me, from Lady Vernon, who, she informed me was below, to see me immediately. The woman said, her ladyship appeared in great distress: I hurried on my clothes, and hastened down, where I found her drowned in tears; she was in a masquerade habit. I eagerly enquired the cause of her distress, when she wrung my heart by informing me she had been discovered by Lord C——, Colonel Conway, and her brother, concealed in Mr. Lesley's lodgings; that the former had conducted her to me, and that the latter had gone in pursuit of Mr. Lesley, who had withdrawn himself on the discovery: that she did not doubt but that the meeting would be fatal to one of them, as her brother had imprecated the most horrid curses on his head never to return till he had revenged the dishonour of his family! She protested the innocence of Mr. Lesley, and solemnly assured me the only motive of
her

her visit was, to satisfy some doubts she entertained of her having been deceived into her marriage with Lord Vernon: she ended her recital, by begging I would suffer her to remain under my protection till she had informed her husband of what had happened; for which purpose she desired I would send to the Pantheon, where she believed he still was, and request him to come instantly to my house. I complied, and his lordship was not long in obeying the summons. I received him, but had not courage to tell him more than that a misfortune had happened to his lady, of which she herself wished to inform him. I then conducted him to her; her distress appeared to perplex and astonish him—we were all silence. At length, Matilda, assuming a dignity which nothing but conscious innocence could have enabled her to support, addressed him in the following words:

Lord

“ Lord Vernon, I have been discovered in a situation this night which must for ever destroy my fame, therefore any assurance I could give you of my innocence would be fruitless, as it could neither satisfy you or the world. I will, therefore, spare myself the mortification of attempting a defence that I know must be unsuccessful, and only conjure your lordship to believe my distress is infinitely increased by the knowledge, that my misconduct dishonours you.” She then related the circumstances that had happened, and concluded by again expressing her regret for the share a mis-judging world would throw upon him of her infamy.

His lordship did not once attempt to interrupt her ; even when she had ceased, he remained silent, and she again addressed him :

My

“My lord, there is another point on which I must speak a few words, as the conduct of Lady C—— might otherwise be deemed reprehensible: the mask you this night conversed with as her ladyship, was my unfortunate self; the truth of this my present dress will confirm.” He started from his seat, exclaiming, “Infamous wretch! speak no more, lest I be tempted to wash out the stain you have given me with your harlot’s blood, and so prevent the law from doing me that justice I will instantly demand! Till then, go to your seducer, or where your fortune leads you, for my doors shall be for ever shut against you.”

He now left the room and house with the utmost precipitation, leaving the poor Matilda quite subdued. I spent the remainder of the night in endeavouring to comfort her, and she was becoming more composed, when my woman ran into the room,

room, crying, "Oh dear, my lady! poor Mr. Lesley is gone to Newgate; he has murdered two gentlemen!" This was too much for Lady Vernon; she fell from her seat, and I thought, for some time, she had escaped from the malice of the world; but she at length recovered, and, in a fearful tone, asked what were the names of the murdered men? but this the woman could not tell. She then entreated me to send instantly to learn—the messenger soon returned, and informed me the brother of Lord C—— was one; but oh, my Emma! how shall I tell—in what words shall I convey to you the name of the other! Will my sweet girl, my beloved friend, collect all her fortitude! Will she stifle the feelings of a sister, to enable her to support the duties of a daughter? Will she, too, forgive the hand which cruel necessity has compelled to undertake the unfriendly office of rending her heart, by adding the name of George Howard,

Howard, as that of the second victim to the unhappy Lesley's fury? Yet, I wrong this ill-fated young man, by using the term of fury, as several witnesses (at least in regard to your brother) acquit him of every particle of blame, and declare he only defended his own life; and that Mr. Howard lost his by his over eagerness to destroy him. This I can easily believe, for I have seen Mr. Lesley, and his sorrow for the untimely fate of your brother, so entirely engrosses him, that he seems to have forgotten the danger and dishonour of his own situation. It is hardly necessary to say Lady Vernon is inconsolable: you may rest assured nothing in my power shall be wanting to restore her to peace, and reconcile her to herself, with whom she is at present greatly at variance.

I wish I had any thing to add to this melancholy letter that could serve as an
antidote

antidote to the poison it contains ; but that is a happiness which is denied me. I must therefore again conjure my friend to exert all that excellent sense with which nature has endowed her, and to reflect, the life of a parent depends on her. That the Father of mercies may bless her endeavours, and administer consolation to the afflicted bosom of her family, is the first wish of her whose heart partakes most sensibly of your distress ; and who is, with the greatest affection,

Your deeply sympathizing

MARIA PAULET.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

WILLIAM LESLEY, ESQ. TO DOCTOR
HOWARD, DEAN OF —.

IT is with a trembling hand, and breaking heart, I address the revered instructor of my youth: With what sensations will he peruse that which is written by the destroyer of his daughter's fame, and the murderer of his son! Will he not cast it from him—will he not curse the detested name, and call for vengeance on the villain's head who has, in one day, plunged his hitherto unspotted family in sorrow and disgrace? Yes, you will; you must: but indeed, my honoured sir, I dare not longer call you friend! The wretch you execrate is the innocent cause of your calamities:

calamities : he is an unwilling murderer, and he is free from, not only the crime, but the most distant intention of seduction.

Lady Vernon has long been the idol of my heart, and had pledged herself to be the companion of my days. Fraud and artifice have been successfully practised to sever us; since which accursed hour, peace has been a stranger to my bleeding bosom: that my love has been less, I will not pretend; for I feel, whilst I have life, it can know no decrease, but it has been as pure as it was violent; nor could I, dearly as I prize your daughter, have been gratified by possessing her person; nay, even her heart, if her fame had been the forfeit. She, no doubt, has informed you of the situation in which she was discovered, as also the motive which had led her to it: I shall, therefore, say nothing further on this distressing subject, than to give you the most solemn assurance,

rance, that she is innocent; and that imprudence, proceeding from a thoughtless disposition, is the greatest and only offence she has committed; and that she had, with that delicacy and propriety which has ever marked her thoughtful determinations, resolved never more to converse with me. That what I have written is truth, I call heaven to witness, and invoke its mercy or chastisement accordingly. I am now in a situation not to trifle with Omnipotence, as I probably stand on the brink of eternity: for, though I have nothing to fear from the death of your lamented son, yet I have much to apprehend on account of Colonel Conway. Yes, sir, my own heart tells me, if justice has its course, I shall, ere long, finish my short but unfortunate career, by an ignominious death, and thus expiate my offence to society.

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In a very few days I shall appear before my earthly judge, whether to be condemned or acquitted I am very doubtful. Should the laws of my country be less severe than my conscience tells me I deserve, and permit me to remain my allotted time, I shall receive their mercy with gratitude, and use it as the means of making my peace with my offended Maker; should it be otherwise, and I be hurried to meet my God, with all my crimes on my head, I feel I shall have a fearful account to answer, and that I shall want every support I can receive on this side the grave. Need I say, the forgiveness of the man whose peace I have destroyed, is the first comfort this world can bestow; and the knowledge I had obtained it, and that he had taken to his protection the innocent, but ruined Matilda, would rob me of half my terrors at appearing in the next. Will the friend
of

of my infancy, the instructor of my youth, refuse the last boon he will have power to bestow ! Will he not contribute to relieve the anxiety, the despair of his once loved pupil ! of his unfortunate, but not in regard to him, guilty Lesley !

Oh, sir, did you know the anguish my soul endures at the idea of your sorrows ! Did you know the horror with which I behold the ill-fated hand which guided the accursed steel to the bosom of your son, you would pity, and ask of heaven to alleviate, my distress !

The uncertainty I am at present in of the consequences that will follow my imprisonment, makes me anxious to conceal my unhappy situation from my father till my fate is determined. Your own heart will point out to you that my motive for this is to save him every fruitless hour of wretchedness. Should the event of my
trial

trial be unfavourable, it will then be time enough to murder him with the news; for I feel I shall have a parent's death added to my crimes, as he cannot, he will not survive the destruction of his hopes, by the loss of a son on whom, unfortunately, he had set too high a value. But I will no longer intrude my griefs on one who is already weighed down by calamities of his own! Calamities which prey incessantly on my mind, and unfit me for the awful business which awaits me.

Farewell, then, most honoured, most venerated of men! I shall make known to you the decision of my country as soon as I am acquainted with it; till then, I remain, with the deepest regret for, the misery I have occasioned,

Your sorrowing,

Humble Servant,

WILLIAM LESLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

THE HONOURABLE CHARLES MACKENZIE

TO WILLIAM LESLEY, ESQ.

My dear William,

I AM prevented returning to you as soon as I promised; I therefore think it best to acquaint you of the effect of my meeting with that monster, the Countess of N—. Arm yourself, my lost Lesley, with all your fortitude, to meet the vengeance of the law, for this devil absolutely denies any remembrance of Colonel Conway's having even attempted to speak after he had received the wound: what her motive can be is beyond my comprehension,

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but I am convinced she seeks your life, and that her evidence, if not dictated by malice, will at least be warped by prejudice. I must confess (for it would be folly to mislead you) that I think you have much to fear, and nothing to hope, but from the mercy of your sovereign; to make friends to intercede with him in your favour is now my pursuit, therefore do not expect me till you see me. Should I be successful, the joy of my heart will give speed to my steps; should I be otherwise, oh William! how shall I speak the dreadful tidings! But what need of words—the despair of my bosom will be visible in my countenance: you will there read your own evil destiny, and the destruction of your Mackenzie's peace, and save me the agony of utterance: till then, farewell my dear, my unhappy Lesley,

Your's, as ever,

CHARLES MACKENZIE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

THE HONOURABLE CHARLES MACKENZIE,

TO THE EARL OF D——.

My honoured Lord and Father,

THOUGH almost fainting under fatigue of body and anxiety of mind, I take up my pen to fulfil your desire by informing you of the state in which I found our poor friend, and also of the situation of his affairs. This I have the more leisure to do with precision, as I am prevented returning to him, not having courage to acquaint him with the disappointments I have met with in all my efforts to serve him.

On my arrival in town I hastened to the place of his confinement; I found him, oh my God! fir, so altered, so dejected, so overwhelmed with sorrow, that I could hardly trace the smallest resemblance to the animated, the cheerful man we had so often gazed on with wonder and admiration: yet, it was easy to perceive it was not his own fearful situation that made any part of the weight which oppressed him. Though he acquits himself of every shadow of criminality on Mr. Howard's account, his death hangs heavy on him; and the dread of Lady Vernon's shame and sufferings, have quite bereft him of all the fortitude with which he could have borne his own calamities. When I had, in some degree, calmed his sorrow, I left him, and repaired to the Countess of N——. She was, at first, denied to me; but, on seeing the porter, he confessed she was at home, and I prevailed on him to send up my name, to which her ladyship's being

being a stranger, I owe my admission: she was alone. After the usual ceremonies, I commenced my business by telling her I should apologize to any other person than her ladyship for my present intrusion, but as I was come to plead the cause of distressed innocence, I doubted not of finding her ready to excuse, and eager to assist me. I was not now to learn that the unhappy ever found a zealous advocate in the Countess of N——, who had been always as conspicuous for her benevolence and humanity as for the graces of her person, and the condescending elegance of her manners.

She replied in the same stile, assuring me she should, on this occasion, be doubly rewarded in having it in her power to serve the unfortunate, as, added to that satisfaction, it had been the means of introducing to her acquaintance a gentleman from whose appearance she could

not but form the highest opinion ; so that she felt she should not only be obliged to me for the opportunity of doing service to a fellow creature, but grateful to that fellow creature for being the instrument of making her known to such a petitioner.

Thus encouraged, I proceeded to inform her I was the friend of Mr. Lesley ; and, as such, had come to explain some circumstances to which she was a stranger, and which would greatly lessen, if not render him entirely guiltless. I then recounted the whole affair, as I had received it from poor William. When I had finished, she replied, with an air of affected distress,

“ I would to heaven, Mr. Mackenzie, the story you have told me were as true as I am assured you believe it to be, and I was not the unhappy individual whose testimony must decide on its falshood ; that
you

you have been deceived by the most artful of men I do not wonder. I myself was once led to believe him every thing that was just or honourable ; nor is it without the most mortifying regret, that I now know him to be the basest and most villainous of mankind !—Notwithstanding which, such is the weakness of my nature, I would I had it in my power to be of use to him, but I have not ; for when I am called before God and my country to relate what I know of this black and horrid affair, must I not reveal the truth ? and will not that condemn him ?—Ah, yes, sir ; my evidence, unhappy that I am, must bring condemnation on this guilty wretch ; a condemnation I would give all my hopes in this world to avert : but, alas ! it is my salvation in the next I must forfeit to save him. This is the only consideration which could deter me from deposing a falsehood ; for deep as he has pierced this heart by the murder of a beloved

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loved kinsman; greatly as he has disgraced me by the seduction of a darling, but ungrateful (I must call her) relation, it revolts at the idea of taking his life as atonement! But, situated as I am, there is no alternative: no, sir; I am destitute of every thing but the will to serve you."

Here she wept aloud, and called on God to forgive the man of blood, and extend his mercy to the abandoned Matilda. Had I known nothing of this devil's character, I had been deceived by her well-counterfeited sorrows; but, armed as I was by an ill-opinion of her principles, I was not to be imposed on by her affected grief. I however did not betray my suspicion until I had used every argument and every entreaty I could devise: but finding she still pleaded her conscience, I at length applauded her motive, and added, her veneration for truth would save my poor friend, as I doubted not but the

the dying déclaration of Colonel Conway, when given by so respectable a witness, would operate effectually to preserve his life. She seemed not to comprehend me; I therefore explained myself more fully: when, with the utmost appearance of surprise, she asked me from whom I had received this intelligence? I replied, from one who scorned a falsehood, though to preserve his own life; that she could be no stranger who that was, as most unhappily, there were none but himself and her ladyship present with the dying man. She then, with much pretended regret, assured me Colonel Conway had never spoken after he received the wound, and that he expired instantly.

Finding all my entreaties to change her infernal intentions were vain, and alarmed at my poor Lesley's situation, I determined to wait on Lord Vernon, and try to soften him in his favour. I confess

my hopes of success were very small; but, in such extremes, no shadow was to be neglected. I accordingly repaired to his house, and found him at home: we had formerly been known to each other, and he seemed glad to renew the acquaintance. I lost no time in informing him of the purport of my visit; after looking earnestly in my face for a minute, he asked me if I was mad, or took him for a fool? as one or the other must be the case, or I never would have made an attempt to prevail with him to solicit the life of a scoundrel, who had been detected in the most infamous intercourse with his wife. Entreaty being my errand, to take exceptions was not my business; on this account I took no notice of his words, but proceeded to lay before him such circumstances as were in my friend's favour, and as I concluded him to be ignorant of. But I first assured him I was not mad, and that my petition to him sufficiently shewed

I did

I did not think him a fool, as from one of that description I must have been more than mad to suppose any success could be obtained, as experience had taught me I was to expect nothing great from a weak or little mind; that I was sensible the boon I craved, required, to comply with it, a generous, benevolent heart, a mind superior to revenge and prejudice, and a spirit capable of despising the opinion of the worthless.

I had finished what I had to say in defence of Lady Vernon and Lesley; and observing that he appeared thoughtful, and imagining he was convinced of their innocence, or at least began to entertain doubts concerning it, I eagerly seized the opportunity to entreat his humanity for my poor William! To this end I urged every thing I could suggest that was likely to rouse his feelings, so much so that my agitation had filled my eyes with tears,

and rendered my voice tremulous and almost inarticulate, when, on a sudden, he threw himself back in his chair, and, yawning asked, Which side I was for in the Operatical Dispute? Whether I was for free admission, and the Lord Chamberlain, or pay before you enter, and Taylor?

I was struck dumb; I could not conceive that I had heard a-right, till after another yawn, he enquired if I did not think one of the figurantes at the opera a fine girl? I rose hastily from my seat, when he drawled out, What, will you go? this is but a short visit, Mr. Mackenzie; particularly as it is the only one you have made me these four years. He then rang the bell; I stopped with intent to express the indignation I felt, but rage had choaked my utterance: a servant entering, he said, "Shew the gentleman out, sir, and let me have coffee directly."

directly." I gave him a look of threatening contempt, and withdrew ; but I shall find a time to chastise his insolence. At present my thoughts are too much occupied by my friend's calamitous situation to let so despicable a thing as this wretched lord break in upon them ; but the time will come when either he or I shall have cause to regret this meeting.

Dejected and unhappy, I was on the point of bending my steps towards Newgate, when the idea of making one effort more to serve its forlorn inhabitant, by presenting myself to Lord C——, arrested my course. I eagerly adopted it, and was shortly at his door, where the porter informed me it was not possible I should see his lordship, as no person whatever could be admitted to him till after the funeral of Colonel Conway was over. Unwilling to lose the hope my heart had entertained, I wrote on a card, " Mr. Mackenzie,

Mackenzie, son to the Earl of D——, earnestly entreats Lord C—— will indulge him with half an hour's audience on business of the utmost importance, and in a case where the shortest delay would be fatal to an individual. Mr. M. is sensible that a motive less urgent than his, could not plead at this time an adequate excuse for such an intrusion."

This was carried to him, and instantly an order was given to conduct me to him; this immediate compliance added to my hopes; till, passing an apartment, the door of which was at that moment open, and at each side of which stood a mute, I discovered the coffin which contained the body of the man to whose brother I was going as a petitioner for the life of his murderer! There was something so unnatural, so almost insulting in the attempt, that I would have retreated had I known what pretence to have used. I had not
long

long to consider, for the servant opening a door, announced me, and his lordship came forward to receive me.

My confusion was excessively great, so much so that I did not enter on the subject of my visit, till Lord C—— asked how he was so happy as to have it in his power to serve any person in whose welfare I was interested. I fairly confessed, the solemn preparations which had met my eyes since I entered the house, had made my present undertaking appear so much in the light of presumption, that I was at a loss for words to inform his lordship. He answered, “Then my conjecture is right; you come from the unfortunate Mr. Lesley!” I assured him Mr. Lesley was a stranger to my coming, the motive for which was certainly to implore his lordship’s humanity in favour of that unhappy gentleman, who, without his assistance, must come to an untimely end.

end. He was affected—taking my hand with a look and voice that spoke his sorrow, he said,

“ You know not, Mr. Mackenzie, the pain it gives me to inform you that I am destitute of power to serve your poor friend, having already exerted all the interest I have to no purpose in his favour: he, sir, dies the victim of prejudice—my father’s unjust suspicions bring him to his trial with a desire of revenge, and the evidence of the Countess of N—— condemns him ! Indeed, Mr. Mackenzie, I dare not flatter you ; for, from what I can learn, that woman’s testimony will leave your ruined friend no plea for mercy : I am summoned to relate what I know of this horrid affair—I would I were the only witness, or that I were his jury ; in either case his acquittal should follow : but do not, sir, think my anxiety is shewn merely in words ; I have strove in his behalf,

half, by representing to the Earl, my father (his incensed prosecutor) my opinion, That, situated as Mr. Lesley was, he could not act otherwise than he did in regard to my departed brother, and expressing my hopes and wishes that, in consideration of the great provocation he had received, he would, in case of the prisoner's condemnation, petition the royal clemency in his favour. The success of my entreaties, for I added entreaties, will be best explained by the answer I received." He then produced a letter from the Earl, which was in these words :

" To Lord C——.

" I know not whether most to congratulate you, sir, on your overflow of charity and christian forgiveness, or your wife on the meek, docile husband she has
at

at her disposal. Had the world ever doubted of your subjection, or your lady's authority, it would now be amply convinced of both, as the novelty of a husband at his wife's command, pleading in favour of the murderer of his only brother!—in favour of a man whose interest with that wife is supposed to have arisen from no very honourable connexion, will speak too forcibly to be misunderstood. Had your brother, sir, been as regardless of your honour, as you are of his life, you had escaped the infamy of heaping censure on his memory to preserve a villain, a murderer, and a seducer from the halter, who so eminently merits it, and which I invoke heaven he may shortly obtain. Her ladyship has done well to proclaim the object of her sorrow, as her grief might have been mistaken, and her tears supposed to flow for her lord's relation. At variance as this would have been with her past conduct

conduct to every part of his family, it would not have disgraced her: but she is above hypocrisy, and God forbid that I should attempt to rob her of her single virtue—a virtue, which, to do her justice, she has, since she conferred the title of husband on you, most liberally displayed, scorning to disguise the most censurable conduct. But she is your wife, and, as long as she confines herself to guiding only you, I shall not give myself much trouble; but when her arrogance would lead her to dictate to me in my affairs, I shall think it my duty to remind her of her presumption, and you of your weakness. I have nothing further to add, than that you may rely on my endeavour to obtain justice for the irreparable injury I have sustained in the loss of a darling son: blood calls for blood! my cries shall be loud, and, I trust, effectual. Should I have the mortification to see the heir to
my

my title and estate giving evidence against me, and excusing the slaughter of his brother, I shall have fresh cause to regret I had given birth to so degenerate a being.

W——."

When his lordship perceived I had finished this insulting and inhuman letter, he said, "Tell me, sir, if, after this, I can do any thing further?" I replied, "for the world I would not ask it," convinced as I was it must be injurious to himself, and useless to Lesley.

I now took my leave of this amiable man, with a promise to visit him while I staid in town. Thus you see the wretched success which has attended all my efforts: I must now go to the prison of my lost friend with the hopeless tidings. I shall inform you of his fate as soon as it is decided;

decided; till when, I remain, with the
utmost respect, my honoured lord and
father,

Your Lordship's affectionate Son,

CHARLES MACKENZIE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

THE COUNTESS OF N— TO THE DEAN
OF —

WERE I going to acquaint my valued brother with the death of his unfortunate Matilda, as well as that of his gallant son, I should not feel the reluctance I now do; for I am sensible he would submit with resignation to the will of him, who giveth and taketh away when it seems best to his wisdom. I should then, instead of offering, apply to him for consolation under the severe affliction with which my heart is oppressed: I would only tell him, his amiable, his virtuous children had removed from a world for which they were too good, to that heaven where he would
join

join them. But in what words shall I convey to him the distressing tale of his daughter's infamy! or in what language shall I tell him the support of his name, the hope of his house, has fallen a victim to his sense of the dishonour she had brought on his hitherto unspotted family. Oh, no form of speech is adequate to the dreadful task, and I would recall the direful intelligence; but it will not be: is there then no medium left? must I break the heart of the friend I love!—May I not soften the errors of a guilty wretch! Ah, no! even that comfort is denied me; for reason tells me it cannot avail, as truth, though covered with a seven-fold mask, will force its way, and strike, with double violence, the bosom which mistaken tenderness has filled with hope. Then courage, come to my heart, and drive hence this woman's weakness; give me resolution to relate the horrid story; and oh, thou power supreme! give to my

my

my aged friend, and his deserving daughter, that fortitude the weight of woe will ask! Support them heaven!—let not the depravity of a creature they once loved, sink them in unavailing sorrows.

Yes, my esteemed brother, that Matilda who was the idol of your fond affection, and, alas! of mine too, is depraved beyond the hope of being reclaimed. My affliction is increased by the knowledge that I have unhappily been instrumental to her undoing, by raising her to a situation which not only gave her the power of indulging her vicious inclinations, but has rendered her fall more conspicuous. The goodness of my intentions is my only comfort; I early saw a levity in her temper which alarmed me, and I instantly determined to place her under the protection of some worthy man, whose prudence would prevent her running into errors, and whose indulgence would make her

ner happy. For this purpose I cast my eyes round my acquaintance ; Lord Vernon was the fittest man on earth, but he was almost beyond my hopes: yet, I saw the beauty of Matilda had attracted him, and I lost no opportunity of placing her in such situations as were likely to increase his good opinion; nor did I hesitate to embrace his first proposal of making her his wife. I instantly informed her of what had passed between Lord Vernon and me, and of my intentions, if she approved of his lordship, to have her united to him without loss of time; giving, as my reason for this haste, the fear of Lord Vernon's friends preventing a match so very inferior, in point of fortune, to what he might command: but my real motive for using such expedition was the dread that this young nobleman might be disgusted by that levity which she could not always conceal. She seemed delighted

with her good fortune, and the marriage was accordingly celebrated.

Now, my dear friend, you are acquainted with the cause of that haste which so much, and so justly displeased you: a cause I had hopes you would have ever remained a stranger to, but which known, will, I trust, acquit me of neglecting you, from any but a laudable intention. As soon as I had seen the ceremony performed, I left them at his lordship's seat, nor saw them again till their return to town, some months after, when I with sorrow perceived Lord Vernon was far from happy; and my pain was augmented by seeing he had too much cause for his uneasiness. I took the opportunity which a discovery of her ladyship's having meetings with Mr. Lesley, at a jeweller's, afforded me, of remonstrating with her on her improper conduct. She took my well-

well-meant rebuke as an insult, and made it a pretence of withdrawing herself from my protection, and almost acquaintance ; nor was this all ; for she immediately attached herself to a lady of the name of Paulet, a connexion I had earnestly wished her to avoid : my reason for this wish I will not trouble you with, though reasons I certainly had. The lady's husband is abroad, and, in short, I disapproved it : perhaps my ideas are over delicate.

In this manner things went on, till last evening, when Lord Vernon called on me and informed me Matilda was not well enough to go to the masquerade ; but, at a late hour, I was surprised by a visit from Colonel Conway, a gentleman whose great worth had gained him a passport to my house at times when most of my acquaintances would have been refused admittance. He appeared much confused, and said the urgency of his business

sinews must plead his excuse for such an unseasonable intrusion. He then proceeded to relate, that some circumstances having discovered to him that an improper intimacy subsisted between his sister-in-law, Lady C——, and a young man of the name of Lesley; and having seen a female who he took, from her voice and conversation, to be her ladyship, accompany him home from the masquerade to his lodgings, he had insisted on his brother's repairing thither with him, that he might, by detecting her infidelity, be enabled to do himself justice. That, on Mr. Lesley's denying he had any lady under his roof, he, Colonel Conway, had broke into his bed-room, where, finding a woman masked, he had dragged her forth, and compelled her to discover her face, not doubting to find his sister; but, to his infinite astonishment it proved to be Lady Vernon! Oh, my dear sir, you must figure to yourself the horror this shocking

shocking intelligence filled me with, for it is impossible I should describe it. I was struck dumb!

Colonel Conway was expressing his sorrow at being the unfortunate cause of this discovery, when a servant entered and informed him, a gentleman who would not be refused, insisted on seeing him instantly. He immediately left me; I was too much engaged with the horrid tidings I had just heard to pay any attention to what passed, till I was alarmed by the servant's telling me the gentleman had a drawn sword in his hand, and seemed to have mischief in his countenance.

I now went to the door of the room where Colonel Conway was, and stopping there, plainly heard him express his concern for what had happened, while his companion, who I knew to be the villainous seducer of your daughter, loaded him

with every scurrilous and opprobrious epithet that language could furnish. Wonderful was the patience and gentleness of the insulted Colonel! it could be equalled by nothing but the respect with which he spoke of Lady Vernon, and the protestations of his for ever preserving her secret, but from those whose interest in it was nearly as great as her own, and who it was necessary to communicate it to; so that proper steps might be taken. All he said seemed only to increase the fury of his boisterous adversary, who, taking the advantage of his unguarded situation, made a violent thrust at him with his sword. I now ran into the room, but, alas! I was too late; for the poor Colonel had fallen to the ground with the weapon through his body: I raised him up and called to the murderer to help me to place him on a sofa, but he had made use of the opportunity, and escaped. I rang the bell for help, which brought my people about me,

me, but in vain: the help of man could not avail, as life had for ever forsaken the body. I was distracted, and knew not what to do: I retired to my closet to study if any means remained of preserving the fame of my undeserving relation. I had not been long there when Lord Vernon entered; the rage and anguish depicted in his countenance, left me no room to doubt the cause of his visit: it is hardly necessary to say our meeting was a melancholy one. He added to the information I had already received, that his ungrateful wife had put herself under the protection of Mrs. Paulet, to whose house she had sent for him, and there informed him of not only her own infamy, but also of her being the person with whom his lordship had conversed at the masquerade, and not Lady C——, as she had given him reason to suppose. I asked Lord Vernon what the conversation had been; but he said it could not be repeated

to the ears of chastity: that it was sufficient to say it was of a nature that had given him the most contemptible opinion of the morals and character of the injured Lady C——.

After some time spent in fruitless sorrow, we consulted on what steps ought to be taken respecting the corpse, and the assassin, when we determined to inform Lord C—— of the untimely fate of his brother, and likewise to send the officers of justice in pursuit of the villain. To the last command I received for answer, that he was already secured, and conducted to prison for the murder of a gentleman at his own lodgings. Unable to conjecture who the second object of this iron-hearted wretch's fury could be, I enquired; when oh, my revered friend! my before bleeding bosom was stabbed by the intelligence that it was your son! —In the anguish of the moment I made
a vow,

a vow, and called heaven to witness it, that I would use my utmost power to see justice executed on the destroyer of my valued relative: now that reason has resumed her seat, I repent my rashness, but it is too late: I am bound, and must fulfil my obligation. Ah, forgive me, my dear sir! and pity the weakness of a heart that shudders at the thought of depriving a human creature of life, which I fear my evidence must, even though that creature is the worst of beings—the most unprincipled of men. Yes, though he is the seducer of our ruined Matilda, and the murderer of our beloved Howard, still this foolish bosom trembles at the idea of assisting justice to punish his offences.

But my vow: yet, why do I mention it!—had it not been made, my country's laws would have compelled me to depose the truth, or call God to witness to falsehood. Then be at peace, my heart, nor

upbraid me with a rashness which agony dictated, and which will neither add to, or take from the guilt of the unhappy culprit, who I must leave to the fate which awaits him, while I consult with my distressed friend on what is to be done with the ill-fated Matilda. It is Lord Vernon's wish that she should immediately quit England, and settle in France, where this noble-minded man will support her according to the rank she has disgraced, but never see her more. I have joined in his desire as far as sending her abroad for a time, because I know it is the only way to secure her future happiness; for I am very sure her stay in France will rest with herself, as a few years good conduct will open the heart and arms of her still fond husband.

I doubt not you will join with me in embracing this most prudent measure: indeed, in the certainty you will, I shall not
wait

wait your answer, but acquaint her, it is your desire that she instantly follows the commands of the injured Lord Vernon in quitting England. I am too much fatigued to add more than that I am, with love to my sweet Emma,

Your sympathizing Friend and Sister,

N—.

LETTER XXXV.

THE DEAN OF ——— TO WILLIAM LESLEY,

ESQ.

THOUGH the destroyer of my ill-fated children cannot expect consolation from the wretched poor old man whose days he has shortened, and who he has sent to the grave loaded with sorrow and disgrace ; yet, he will not be displeased to know, that great as his own calamities are, he had dropped a tear of anguish to the memory of the fallen youth, whose virtues and abilities he had so often contemplated with wonder and delight ; and that that tear was embittered by the recollection of the pride he had felt, in having assisted to implant those virtues, and expand abilities of which, old as he
was,

was, he fondly hoped to see the glorious fruits. What has been the reward of his almost parental anxieties? What has been the success of his hopes? A murdered son, and a ruined daughter, repay the first; a life marked with crimes, and ended with shame, is the completion of the latter.

Oh, thou unfortunate! whither hast thou wandered since our separation!— Into what dark labyrinth have thy erring steps been led! Some foe to goodness has corrupted thy once noble heart, and driven thee to deeds which have undone thee; they have undone me too. Oh, tell me, Why was I marked out to be the object of destruction! Was there none other whose ruin would have satisfied you, than the man whose pupil you had been? —The man, many of whose hours had been dedicated to guard you against vice, and the crimes of which you have made him

him the victim!—Was there none other than the man who loved you? the man who, when he petitioned Almighty God to bless the children of his heart, ranked you in the number? Yes, poor ruined youth! the apartment from which I now address you, has often been witness to my earnest supplications for your earthly and eternal happiness, as well as the lessons of morality and instruction alike conveyed to you and my beloved George; nor was the wretched Matilda forgot; she too partook of the intended blessings. How has my soul rejoiced at the avidity with which each appeared to listen to and receive the only portion their father and their friend could give them! How have I looked down on the pleasures wealth and grandeur could bestow, while I felt the gladness of my heart surpassed them all! With what pride have I cast my eyes round this humble repository of learning, when containing the creatures whose happiness I
vainly

vainly thought I was securing, and asked my soul if the whole world contained so blessed a being as myself! Smiles sat on my brow, peace and tranquillity dwelt in my bosom, while I performed the task of instruction, or joined in the mirthful sallies of my youthful and innocent auditors.

Now mark the change! an awful silence reigns, except it is interrupted by the sighs of a wretched father, or the lamentations and entreaties of a broken-hearted sister. In a corner of the room lies the body of one of its late cheerful inhabitants, mute as the earth to which it will shortly be consigned: near it is placed the agonized parent whose breast was so late the seat of hope and anticipated delight. Sorrow and shame have now usurped their place; and though he is old, very old, they have done more in a few days towards making his grave, than all the years he had numbered. He is employed

ployed in the painful task of writing to the murderer of his only son, on whose blood-stained corpse, the tear-dimmed eye too frequently turns; and while it surveys the poor pale object of thy fury, the recollection that he died by thy hand, makes every drop of blood in this exhausted frame hide itself in my heart, till memory, ever faithful to the wretched, reminds me of my daughter's infamy, and again recalls it to my blushing cheek: yet, you say she is innocent. Oh, thou murderer of Howard's hope! prove but that her soul is free from guilt, and I will bless thee with my latest breath; and I will weary heaven to forget that thy hand is stained with blood!—but it will not, it cannot be! Each circumstance confirms her fall, and she is lost to me and heaven! Poor ruined wretch! might all the anguish of thy miserable parent but obtain thy pardon at the great tribunal, with how much readiness would he sacrifice the remnant

remnant of his days ! Oh ! might these flowing tears, which scorch my aged cheeks but wash out thy stain, and bring thee to that heaven where I should meet you, then would the disgrace I suffer here, and all my woes, be recompensed. And must I not behold my cherub !—must we be eternally separated ! Great God, forbid it, and look down with mercy on thy faithful servant—pour into his bleeding bosom the blessed comfort, to know that she repents, and that she lifts her supplicating heart to thee for pardon and salvation ! Then would I take her to these feeble arms, and press her to my breast. Yes, I would cherish and support her against an host of foes : the malice of this world should pass unheeded, while we prepared us to enjoy a better.

But why do I vent my complaints to one whose heart is either too much hardened by guilt to feel them, or too much
oppressed

oppressed by penitence to bear their additions; may it be the latter: for though I would not add to the weight of woe you must in that case feel, yet I should rejoice to know that your bosom was the seat of contrition. Yes, thou ill-fated youth! it would give joy to my soul to be assured you were prepared to meet the awful trial that awaits you, and the too probable consequences of it, with humble resignation, arising from the hope that your unfeigned penitence had sealed your pardon with him who is ever ready to receive the penitent. That this may be the state of your mind, is the anxious wish, and fervent prayer, of the man who has been used to subscribe himself, with the affection of a father,

Your parental Friend,

MELVIL HOWARD.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

LORD VERNON TO SIR HENRY DORSET.

YOUR hair-dresser; no, it will be too stale for him; your milk-woman, and every old woman in the parish will have told you the story of Lady Vernon having been found, at two o'clock in the morning, locked up in the bed-room of her country gallant, the favoured Mr. Lesley; to which convenient place she had accompanied him from the masquerade, and that her furious spark has murdered the Hon. Colonel Conway for having made the discovery, by mistaking her charming ladyship for his sister-in-law; and that, not content with one martyr to the fame of his fair one, he plunged his sword into the

the heart of her brother, for presuming to think she had acted unbecoming her situation. All this you heard, and most probably twenty times as much: I therefore do not write to inform you of it, but only to confirm report, by telling you thus far is true: yes, Harry, the affair is settled, and I am publicly known to be, what I some time suspected, a horned monster! Damnation!—But I will be calm; for, all things considered, I have some points in my favour; as, in the first place, my friend—that is, my lady's friend, is taken off my hands without my having the trouble of calling him to account, either by giving him an opportunity of shooting me through the head by way of satisfaction for the injury he has done me; or by putting it in the power of a set of impudent lawyers, proving he has done me no injury at all, and influencing twelve ignorant jurymen to bring in a verdict of one shilling damages; and faith, for aught I know,

I know, the full value of her ladyship's virtue. But all these unpleasant circumstances the Lothario has prevented, by his Quixotish defence of his Calista; for nothing can save him from making his exit on a scaffold, as the same twelve beef-eating Britons who would most probably have acquitted the adulterer, will most surely condemn the murderer; for they, every one, know the value of a man's life, though not one of them has a conception of that of a lord's honour. At any rate, let it have ended as it would, I am better pleased as it now stands, for I detest trouble; I shall therefore leave her ladyship to her own devices, while I use the same privilege; to which end I will set out shortly for a foreign country, for, upon my soul, Harry, with all my nonchalance, I cannot stand my present cursed situation: the very ballad singers are already engaged in telling how a noble lady was surprised in the arms of her lover, by
her

the heart of her brother, for presuming to think she had acted unbecoming her situation. All this you heard, and most probably twenty times as much: I therefore do not write to inform you of it, but only to confirm report, by telling you thus far is true: yes, Harry, the affair is settled, and I am publicly known to be, what I some time suspected, a horned monster! Damnation!—But I will be calm; for, all things considered, I have some points in my favour; as, in the first place, my friend—that is, my lady's friend, is taken off my hands without my having the trouble of calling him to account, either by giving him an opportunity of shooting me through the head by way of satisfaction for the injury he has done me; or by putting it in the power of a set of impudent lawyers, proving he has done me no injury at all, and influencing twelve ignorant jurymen to bring in a verdict of one shilling damages; and faith, for aught I know,

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her

her husband, who instantly put him to death, and then inhumanly murdered two innocent gentlemen that had rescued from his vengeance the guilty female.

Tired of myself, I this morning walked out and was overtaken by a shower of rain: I dispatched a porter to order my carriage might be sent to a coffee house near which I then was, and into which I went to wait its coming: it was not a house I had used, therefore I was not known. I seated myself in the coffee room among several strangers, one of whom was relating the particulars of Lady Vernon's mishap, or rather mine; for he asserted I had fallen in a duel with my rival!—to which another made answer, “I beg your pardon, sir; but you are entirely mistaken in the affair. In the first place, Lord Vernon would as soon fly in the air, as fight a duel with any man; for a greater poltroon than him does not exist.

exist. No, sir, it is the lover who has fallen; he was run through the body by this noble lord, while he was restrained from defending himself, by several of the peer's servants having held him; but his lordship is now in Newgate, and will shortly undergo a trial, when, if I am one of his jurors, damn me if I don't hang him!" A third, who had been till now silent, thus addressed the last speaker:

"Pray sir do you know Lord Vernon?"—"No, I have never seen him, and I hope I never shall till it be at Tyburn," was the kind reply. "Why then, sir," pursued the third speaker, "you will probably never see him; for he is, ere this, safe in France, as I shook hands with him at Dover last night after the packet was under way with as fair a wind as ever blew. Do not suppose from this that I approve of his lordship's conduct: no, I think it was dastardly and unmanly, and
that

that hanging would be too good for him; but intimate as I have been with him and his family, I could not abandon him in the hour of distress, for the officers of justice were in close pursuit."

The conversation now turned on the probability of my being taken, and they were in the midst of a grand debate, whether or no I should be hanged with a silken cord, when a waiter entered desiring to know if one of the company was Lord Vernon, as his carriage waited? I answered the question by ordering the carriage to draw up to the door; then rising, bowed profoundly to the astonished crew, particularly my intimate friend who had shaken hands with me at Dover; as I thought the humanity that could not abandon me in the hour of distress, deserved peculiar notice, and then left them to comment on what had happened.

Soon

Soon after my arrival at home, I was informed our old school-fellow, Charles Mackenzie wished to speak with me: I was rather surprised at this, as you know he renounced our society some years back, on account, as he impertinently stiled it, of the immoral life we led; nor have I been ever honoured by the smallest notice from him since. I know not how it was, but at this moment I felt glad to see him, and my reception was a cordial one: I really thought his visit was intended as a mark of friendship at a time he imagined I might be uneasy; but he kept me not long in suspense, for he was scarcely seated when he gave me to understand nothing on earth could have induced him to enter my doors, except the business which had now drawn him there; for this was the true meaning of his speech, though delivered in somewhat smoother words.

Now what do you suppose this business was?—Nothing more than the modest request that I would use all my interest, and would myself petition his Majesty to pardon the scoundrel Lesley, who, it seems, is his particular friend. You may guess how I treated so impudent a solicitor—my contempt nettled him, and brought his most extraordinary intrusion to an abrupt departure. With his visit I shall end this epistle, but I must first acquaint you who the person was that undertook the pleasant office of informing me of my dishonour. What do you think of its being her divine ladyship in person? Yes; she chose to be the messenger of her own infamy; and faith, a looker-on would have supposed I was the guilty, she the injured party, with such an air did she carry it: but she may henceforth carry herself and her airs wherever she or her aunt, the Countess of N—— pleases; for to her management I have

have given her. This lady, of whom you know fame formerly buzzed strange things, is now become the most tenaciously delicate, scrupulously nice, and rigidly virtuous, of all dowagers.

Oh, time! what wonders dost thou perform!—Who can tell but my mate (when age sets her free from temptation, and she has no longer the power to sin) may become a saint, and, at some future period be canonized. I wish to my soul the change would take place, and speedily; for then the world would forget I was the husband of such a virtuous creature, and I'll be cursed if ever they do as long as she continues a vicious one. I have this to comfort me, I am not the first great man who has been rendered conspicuous, more by his wife's vices, than his own virtues.

Adieu, Harry; I shall not quit England till the fellow Lesley has made his public exit, as I promise myself some gratification in witnessing it. Once more, adieu.

VERNON.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

THE HONOURABLE CHARLES MACKENZIE
TO THE EARL OF D——.

THE trial is over! and, as I feared, the condemnation of my friend is the result! Yes, sir; the elegant, the learned, the accomplished Lesley is, a few days hence, to end a life unstained by one dishonourable act, and marked by virtues far beyond his years, in the most ignominious manner! May that God who has suffered him to fall without offending, endue him with fortitude to meet his fate with the same dignity and resignation he heard it pronounced! Oh, my father! had you beheld him in this trying moment, you would have looked up to him like me, as

one whom adversity had singled out to make her appear lovely: but I will give you the particulars as fully as the perturbation of my heart, distressed as it is, will allow me to recollect.

On closing my last letter to you, I went to his prison; he saw by my countenance disappointment had attended my endeavours. He begged to be informed of the extent of my hopes and my fears, as concealing the one, or augmenting the other, would be equally futile, and render him less able to meet whatever of evil might await him. I accordingly made him acquainted with all my too well grounded fears; my hopes, alas! were none. He was much agitated for a moment, but soon recovering himself, he became calm and tranquil; and, on my taking leave of him for the night, he urged me to be comforted.

On the morning of his trial, I attended him early, and found him up and ready: his dress was elegant, but plain; his countenance solemn, but not sorrowful. On his appearance at the bar, every person present (of which there were a great number, the court being crowded) seemed struck with the extreme beauty of his figure. The first indictment was for the murder of Mr. Howard; when the witnesses, of which there were several, gave such proofs of his wonderful forbearance before, and exquisite sorrow after, the fatal event, that the jury, without retiring, acquitted him. The joy portrayed in every face, testified the satisfaction of the court.

He was now arraigned for the murder of Colonel Conway, when that fiend of darkness, the Countess of N—— appeared, and gave such testimony against the prisoner, as made it impossible for even the

mercy of the Sovereign to be extended to him, and such as will sink her to everlasting perdition; for, that she exaggerated every circumstance which was against him, and totally concealed every one that was in his favour, I am perfectly convinced of. On Lesley's truth, in any case, I would stake my life; in this his deceiving me could answer no end; yet, had I been less acquainted with his incorruptible veracity, the steady unequivocal evidence this devil gave, would have made me doubt. Not one moment was she off her guard, nor once did she hesitate, or if she did, it appeared from reluctance to injure the culprit, though his counsel examined and cross examined, with an exactness which would have confounded any witness save herself, had they even been deposing the honest truth, though the judge, whose wishes to save him were evident, entreated her to take time and reflect, as she might possibly recollect the
forgive-

forgiveness and acquittal which the prisoner protested had been pronounced by the dying man. She still adhered to her first declaration, that he expired without uttering a syllable.

Lord C—— now appeared in court, and was called on to relate what he knew of the unhappy affair. The Earl, his father, was likewise present, which did not prevent (though I am convinced that was his intention) his amiable son from doing justice to the unfortunate murderer of his brother; for after relating what he had been witness to of the affair, he added, the situation he was at that moment in was truly distressing, as what he had further to say, he was well assured, would deprive him perhaps for ever of the affection and esteem of those whose affection and esteem were necessary to his happiness. Yet, miserable as he should feel himself under their displeasure, he felt he should

still be more so, if he refrained from performing an act of justice, by declaring, situated as the prisoner was, distracted by passion, and agitated by distress arising from the noblest feelings of the heart, that of seeing the peace and fame of her he loved utterly destroyed, he could not act otherwise than he did: and that he must further say, from the knowledge he had of his deceased brother's temper, he was certain Mr. Lesley was much more likely to meet with additional insult from him, than the humble apology which was certainly his due: yet, while he said this, he begged not to be misconceived, as he meant not to insinuate that his brother would refuse to atone for the injury he had been the occasion of, for if allowed time to reflect, there lived not the man who would be more penitent for his fault, or more eager to redress it. From this knowledge he was led to believe most firmly, that what Mr. Lesley averred he had spoken in his last moments

moments was literally true, notwithstanding the witness, in her alarm, had forgot it. He was certain the honour and humanity of Colonel Conway were too great to suffer him to leave the world without performing this act of justice, if he possessed the power of utterance. He then apologized for detaining the court, but begged its attention whilst he declared, that in his intimacy with Mr. Lesley, he had never observed in him the smallest tendency to quarrel or rashness: on the contrary, he had remarked him to be averse to disputation, patient of contradiction, and ever ready to yield, though on the point of conquest: humble to his inferiors—condescending to his equals—polite and attentive to his superiors. In short, he was a man he was proud to call his friend, as he conceived himself honoured by the title, viewing him as a being which nature had rendered as perfect as was consistent with her plan. He then

added, he had now paid the tribute justice demanded, and he felt himself happy in having done so, not only from the idea he had done what was his duty, but from the certainty of having done what would be grateful to the spirit of his departed brother; a brother he had ever loved with the fondest affection, and whose loss at this moment rent his heart with anguish. He retired, amidst the applauses of all present.

The prisoner was then called on to make his defence, when he declared he had none to make, as he must plead guilty to the murder of Colonel Conway, unless passion and distraction, infirmities to which human nature were subject, and which had been increased to madness by the cool and unfeeling insult of his antagonist, could be admitted as excuse; nothing else he had to say could palliate his crime, the dying acquittal of his adversary

fary being from some mysterious cause with-held by one, whose unaccountable hatred (not content with having made his life unhappy) pursued him to the grave. He acknowledged he had followed Colonel Conway with the determination of either depriving him of life, or falling by his hand. But, notwithstanding the murderous intention ascribed to him by the uncandid witness, he meant not to be an assassin: great as his perturbation was, it could not make him forget what was due to himself; his intention was to meet the man who had destroyed his peace on equal terms; and on those terms, as far as a being actuated by fury, and one calm and deliberate could be equal, did they meet. He begged not to be understood to vindicate an action which he felt would embitter his future days, whether their number were few or many; neither had he spoken with an idea, that the poor justification he could make would influence

fluence his judges; he knew their deliberations would be followed by such a decision as the laws of his country, and their own consciences, pointed out to them to be just, and most calculated for the benefit of mankind; but he had feared total silence might have been construed into a contempt of life, which he by no means felt; for though a long life was, after the calamities which had befallen him, hardly to be desired, there was something so repugnant to his feelings in the thought of dying like a villain, that he confessed his nature shuddered at it, and made him (though he trusted he should even meet that with fortitude) anxiously desire that something might be found in his unhappy situation to mitigate his offence, and make it short of murder.

The jury now withdrew, and after some time returned with their verdict, which was given in a faltering voice—guilty!

The

The judge now addressed the prisoner, saying, it remained for him to perform the painful task of passing the sentence of the law—a task the most distressing of any he had ever experienced since he had had the honour of sitting on that bench, because it robbed the world of a man who, but for the rashness of passion, might have long been an ornament to it. He lamented such talents and acquirements should be doomed to so unhappy a fate ; a fate he must prepare himself to meet, as, from the nature of the evidence there remained no possible plea for complying with the wishes of the court, by recommending him to mercy. He then took occasion to address the spectators, by entreating them to impress their minds with the unhappy, but instructive lesson before them ; it would teach them to guard against the first impulse of anger, and to subdue that propensity to wrath and rashness which, though always imputed to nature,

nature, was too often the force of habit, and an unbridled temper. But, he continued, if the example before you is not a sufficient warning, nothing I can urge will have any effect, even were I endued with the sense and eloquence of a God; for seldom will an object be found possessed of such worth and abilities, such elegance of person, such sweetness of manners as the unfortunate youth before you; yet, you behold him a fallen victim to an ungovernable temper: you behold the man who might have been an honour and benefit to his country, the glory of his relations, and the pride of his friends, condemned to die an ignominious death. You behold him cut off in the bloom of youth, his hands stained with blood, and his till now fair fame, mangled by the tongue of malice.

Grief here choaked his utterance—he paused for some time, at length pronounced

nounced the horrid sentence, which is to be put in execution four days hence. It was received by the spectators with every token of sorrow; the object of their pity was apparently the least distressed person present; his manner was collected and tranquil. He bowed to the judge, thanking him for the compassion he had shewn him, and the jury for the fairness of his trial, and the wishes they had betrayed in his favour.

He left the court, and I attended him back to prison; my agitation affected him; he conjured me to be more calm, and added, he had an errand to employ me in, which would require more composure than I at present possessed; it was to be the bearer of the heart-rending tidings of his calamities to his father; to that father who fondly thought him engaged in studying those laws under whose rigour he had fallen.

The

The recollection of his father deeply affected him; he was buried in thought, during which tears of anguish, that his own sufferings had not had power to make him shed, streamed down his cheeks: he continued in a voice broken and low, "Dear unhappy mistaken parent! how will you bear this stroke that awaits you! how will you receive the cruel tidings! that he, whom your parental fondness had made you figure as a teacher of lawful obedience, should, at the hour of your highest expectation, be arraigned for a breach of those laws he meant you should instruct others not to infringe!—that he, on whose education has been squandered your fortune—that he, for whose worldly happiness your unceasing care has been anxious, ends all your hopes, by drawing down on him the utmost vengeance of the laws, and forfeiting a life from which you had expected so much, to justice and his offended country.

try. Oh, forgive me ! forgive your ill-fated son ! nor let his untimely end be the shortener of your days !”

Then turning to me, he seized my hand, and pressing it between his, hard upon his bosom, his eyes fixed on my face, he conjured me to be gentle in my discovery, and to watch over the remnant of his father’s days. I could only reply by pressing his hand, my heart being too full to allow me utterance.

We had reached the prison, and the jailor informed us the condemned cell must be Mr. Lesley’s future residence. The man’s reluctance to perform his duty was visible : my friend thanked him for the concern he testified, and bade him lead the way. I would have attended him to this last abode of the criminal, but he reminded me of the journey I had undertaken, and the few days I had to perform

perform it in : for, he added, my Charles will not refuse me the consolation of his presence at the last solemn hour. I assured him he might depend on my speedy return, and left him.

I must now conclude this melancholy letter, as my carriage waits to convey me to the retreat of the man into whose bosom I am going to pour a poison which time cannot eradicate. I shall, at my entrance under his roof, like the bird of omen, drive hence all sounds of cheerfulness, all tranquillity and peace, and fill it, in their stead, with sorrow and despair. How ill-calculated am I to perform so ungrateful an office, you, sir, who know the sentiments of my heart will conceive, and will feel for the distresses of your

Affectionate Son,

CHARLES MACKENZIE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

SIR HENRY DORSET TO LORD VERNON.

WHY, my dear lord, what a devil of a business you have made of it!—Positively I think you cut a very ridiculous figure. If this is matrimony, my stars, defend me from it; though in one respect you have been lucky; for you have got rid of your wife with more expedition than most men, or than any prudent man could have got one: but you married for love! If I ever do so simple a thing, let me perish; or what is worse, be the sport of the vulgar, as your lordship is, for your rank is no protection; and each plebeian in this land of liberty, wags his saucy tongue, and jests at your new title, as they

they call it, with as much *sang froid* as if you were entitled to no other.

But I quit the multitude, and give you the conversation of a select party I was in this evening, for which I was dressing when your epistle arrived, and gave me the first account of your disaster. On my soul, my lord, I could not refrain from indulging in a hearty laugh, though it was at my friend's expence! As soon as I could compose my muscles, I ordered my friseur to use all possible expedition. I was obeyed, and lost no time in getting to the house where my engagement was: the party was pretty large. After the never-failing topic of the weather had been discussed, the next words of course that were spoken, were, Is there any news to-day?

Now was my time; but as it was well known your lordship and myself were sworn brothers, I thought it would be necessary

cessary for me to appear sorrowful. I accordingly put on a dismal countenance, and gently breathed out, I would there were not.

These simple words had the effect of an electric shock—every soul was in commotion—I was dinned with female voices, all at the same time, though in different keys and acclamation, one crying, “Good God, what can it be!” a second, “For heaven’s sake, Sir Harry, explain! Oh, if you have any compassion, do not keep us in suspense!” I shook my head, and rising hastily from my seat, took a turn across the room as if to conceal my emotion. At length, addressing myself to the company, who were, by this time, quiet from want of breath, I said, I would to God my silence on the unhappy subject would bury it in oblivion, then should it be eternally confined to this bosom, (pressing my hand on my waistcoat) but it is
already

already too public ; therefore my refraining to comply with your commands, ladies and gentlemen, may displease you, but cannot benefit the unhappy parties.

I here cast a look around me ; every mouth was open, but dare not speak for fear of delaying my intelligence ; every eye was fixed on my face. Thinking I had now displayed a proper degree of feeling, and sufficiently worried my auditors, I proceeded to give them what you had communicated to me, adding a few embellishments of my own, such as Lesley's being an attorney's clerk, and your having been tricked into the marriage by the art of your lady's father, who was an old jugler ; and I believe I said something of Lady Vernon's having taken refuge with her lover, who she had cruelly instigated to the murder of her brother ; and that Colonel Conway had lost his life by having been mistaken for your lordship.

Now

Now upon my soul all these additions were only intended to enhance the value of the story to my greedy listeners ; yet, my endeavours were repaid with ingratitude ; but you shall hear. I had made a pause, and was considering whether putting my handkerchief to my eyes would not have a good effect, when a fierce looking young man asked me, in a commanding voice, if I related this from my own knowledge, or from the report of another ? I replied, my authority is, alas ! too good to admit even a hope of what I had stated being exaggerated, as I fancied the company would admit, when I informed them it was from the unhappy Lord Vernon himself. The enquirer replied, “ Then his lordship is the liar, and your only guilt is credulity : for I fancy, retailing of scandal does not deserve a harsher term than meanness.”

I turned hastily to this plain speaker, putting on one of my serious looks, which, though they mean nothing, have frightened many a poor dog into asking pardon; but he was not one of these, for he met my stare with such a determined coolness, that I thought it better to soften my ferocity, and letting the—Fellow, do you know who you are talking to? (that I had prepared to begin with) evaporate in air, I gently begged to be informed from what channel he derived his intelligence, as his authority ought to be beyond all doubt, since he had taken the liberty to apply such harsh expressions to that of my friend? He deigned not to notice what I had said, but taking a letter from his pocket, he told the company it contained a relation of the unhappy affair; but so different from the noble lord's, and his friend's statement, they could not, unless previously informed, have considered it to be the same circumstance: he added,
the

the name of his correspondent would decide on which of the letters dependance could be placed, as he was well known to most present, though probably not to you, sir; (looking at me.) He then, with importance, announced the name of Charles Mackenzie, son to the Earl of D——!

I, with great *sang froid*, said, Is he your authority?—He is an acquaintance of mine—we were at the same college. “That is very possible, so was Lord Vernon, sir: yet, I think he is not honoured with Mr. Mackenzie’s acquaintance, and I think it not unlikely that you also may be strangers,” was his impertinent reply.

Here he was requested by the company to read his letter, with which he complied, and gave me an opportunity to remain silent. When he had finished, the whole set joined in lamenting the too probable

bable fate of Lesley ; in pitying the situation of Lady Vernon ; and in execrating the infamous and inhuman conduct of the Countess of N——, and your lordship.

I believe I looked very silly, for I could not think of a syllable to say in your favour ; I at length stammered out that the two accounts certainly differed, and time would determine which was the true one. Here I was interrupted by a general exclamation of “ You may rely on Mr. Mackenzie !— He never would have written what he has, had he not been well assured the facts were exactly as he stated them.”

Here an old prig rose from his seat, and, with great solemnity, reprobated the manner in which the father of the unfortunate lady had been spoken of : he said, the man who could wrong Doctor Howard so much, must either be the most ignorant,

rant, or the most impudent of human beings; for the whole world could not produce a fairer character than that venerable gentleman bore, and had borne through a life which had been marked by sorrow, poverty, and disappointment. yet, he would be bold to say, at no moment of his distress, would he have given his daughter to a prince, unless he thought he should secure the happiness of both by the union: therefore the words trick, and jugler were not applicable to him, though, from Mr. Mackenzie's letter, he was of opinion they could not be thrown away, if applied to the man who had stolen from another the woman of his affections, and who, feeling himself disappointed, on finding his theft had reached no farther than her person, and that her heart continued with its first master, gave a loose to the malignancy of his own, and triumphed, like Satan, over the ruin he had himself occasioned.

Mackenzie's correspondent now produced another letter, which, he said, though from a person of a very different character to the writer of the one they had just heard, would serve to shew in what light Lord Vernon's conduct was held even among his admirers: it was from Lord Charles Villers, who, you know, is one of us, and as good a fellow at a mad prank as any of our flock; yet, he abuses your lordship as though you had been converted from our faith, and had embraced the sanctified Mackenzie's. He calls you a cowardly paltroon, and a disgrace to your nobility. He says that you and that old sinner, the Countess of N—, have leagued together to hang a fine fellow, because you are afraid, should he be again at liberty, he would oblige you to fight him: he further says, and so does Mackenzie, that Colonel Conway, with his dying breath, did acquit Lesley of his murder; but the old hyæna, your aunt, who

who was the only person present, denies it, which, if she continues to do, will certainly hang the poor young man, instead of being honourably acquitted, as he ought to be ; for that there is no doubt of his being cleared of the death of your brother-in-law.

Now, my lord, I was devilishly confounded when I heard all this, and from such good authority ; for though I should not have minded Mackenzie's story, because I could suppose he would see things in a wrong light ; yet, I must believe Lord Charles, for he is none of your canting gentry : but I must do Mackenzie the justice to say, his letter, of the two, though the accounts contained in them differ very little, is by far the most moderate in regard to the part you have taken in this cursed affair ; a cursed affair you will find it, if you proceed as you have began ; for upon my soul, my lord, I

G 4

verily

verily think, if this innocent man is executed, you will be scouted from society: for do but consider what he has done that you, or I, or any other man of spirit, would not. He has intrigued with your wife—would you not have done the same had you been in his place?—most certainly you would. Well, and he has killed an impertinent, prying fellow, who troubled himself with other people's concerns! Would you not have acted in like manner? Yes, most assuredly. Why then, what is his fault? What is he to die for on a scaffold? Why! for being possessed of graces to gain the affections of Lady Vernon, and of honour and courage to defend her reputation! And is it possible that you, my lord, who have made it the grand rule of your life, never to let any woman that was in your power escape, be she the wife of friend, stranger, or acquaintance, should join your wit with that of an old hyæna, to rob a gentleman of existence!

for

for I find he is a gentleman, notwithstanding your insinuations to the contrary. Indeed, the offences he is now in prison for, proclaim him to be no plebeian.

The prodigious variation between your narrative and that of the other two, leads me to believe your lordship has suffered that tabby, the Countess, to misguide you, and that you will discover your folly when too late to repair it. Therefore I would have you look to what you are about, and not let this lad suffer; which you may prevent by exerting your interest to obtain his reprieve; you will certainly do so, if your ancient adviser has not made you as blindly malicious, and as doating as herself.

In the hope that what I have said will open your eyes, I send it off by express, that you may have the more time to take your measure; which, when concerted, I

shall be glad to hear of ; and, I must be plain to tell you, my lord, that on your conduct in this affair depends our future intimacy : for though no man values you more than I do, or cares less for the opinion of the world in general, yet, my principles would not admit of my countenancing a character which may one day prove fatal to myself : for, I am well aware, if Lesley's crimes merit death, both your lordship and myself ought to have been hanged years ago, and you may possibly think of obtaining me my deserts some day or other. So, my lord, either Lesley lives, or I henceforth avoid you as a man whom it would be dangerous to trust. Fate has given you an opportunity of doing one good action in your life ; in the hope that you will embrace it, I subscribe myself,

Your Lordship's sincere Friend,

And very humble Servant,

HENRY DORSET.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

THE DEAN OF ——— TO WILLIAM LESLEY,
ESQ.

WELCOME, my unfortunate, but guiltless William!—Welcome once more to the heart of the man you lately honoured with the name of father! Oh, my son! my adopted child! can you forgive the unjust suspicions of a wretched parent, whom calamity and artifice had rendered blind and unjust! But your friend, your Mackenzie, has removed the veil from my eyes, and restored you to my affections, and to the pinnacle of honour from which I feared you had fallen: he has likewise reconciled me to my poor erring, but not criminal, Matilda. We shall meet—

yes, we shall meet in heaven! nor will the woes we have suffered here, make us less welcome to him who has witnessed them! No, he will pour balm into our wounds, and we shall be whole!—we shall then cry out with the Psalmist, “It is good for us that we have been afflicted.” Can I then be wretched! Oh, forgive me, God! and let me recall my ungrateful words. I am not wretched—my daughter is innocent! her soul is unspotted! and thou, Lesley, who I lamented as another fallen child, art restored to me and virtue!—and, shall I dare to repine because one of my darlings has been an early victim to the grave! No, “the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away! his will be done;” or shall I be discontented, that the life of another is prolonged, after all possibility of happiness is fled; or that one who is equally dear with those ill-fated loved ones, should be shortly to terminate his days in a violent, and
what

what the world will call a shameful manner. Oh, my William ! if I feel a pang, it is for you !—The miseries of my offspring are forgot when I contemplate the horrors of your situation. Alas ! I meant to encourage you to support them, and I am shewing you they are more than I can bear !

Oh, Lesley ! thou man of sorrow ! I am tempted to exclaim with the poet, " Affliction is enamoured of thy parts, and thou art wedded to calamity." Yet reflect, the days of thy adversity will quickly end, you will be with him who will wipe all tears from your eyes, and where anguish will no more be felt. Take this comfort to your breast ; it will enable you not only to support, but to triumph over the malice of your fate. You will look upon it as an act of humiliation, through which you must pass to everlasting glory ; place your trust then in
Him

Him who alone can support you; he is never deaf to the voice of the wretched. Has he not said, "Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" yes, eternal rest. And what is it you resign for this amazing blessing? A few years of disastrous life—or, say the best, a succession of joys, affliction, pleasures, cares, hopes, and disappointments: for, be assured, the happiest in the journey of life, meet with allays that, to a thinking mind, lessens greatly its value. I am an example that long life is not a real good; my days have been many, but they have been full of sorrow: yet, the world will term me a fortunate man. I have risen to a height in my profession which my early prospect did not promise; but the world is a superficial observer, consequently its judgment erroneous. It witnessed the outward dignity of my station, but it saw not the inward woes of the man; I was, perhaps, the object of envy at the moment.

moment my heart was a prey to incurable anguish. Do not, then, regret the loss of years that might have been increase of misery! neither regard the opinion of the misjudging multitude. Their praise cannot now avail you here, nor can their censure reach you hereafter. What they term disgrace and suffering in this world, will procure you honour and regard in that to come. Your atonement will be accepted by the father of mercies; you will be insensible to what passes below; you will know nothing but eternal happiness. Need I then urge you to resign yourself into his hands, an unrepining, and repentant Christian; need I point out to you, that it is as much your duty to satisfy the offended laws of your country, by meeting the sentence they have pronounced, though that sentence is death, as it would be to make reparation for an injury done to an individual.

I trust

I trust your education has been such as will instruct you, that you are bound by honour, as well as religion, to fulfil the first as scrupulously as you would the second. My prayers to the Almighty shall assist your endeavours, and they will be effectual ; therefore be not dismayed : “ Let not thy soul be full of heaviness ; put thy trust in the Lord, and he will deliver you, for He is mighty and full of compassion.”

I shall, if possible, accompany your hapless parent on his melancholy journey to your wretched abode ; where, if my presence can be useful to you or him, I shall be amply repaid for the sorrow I must endure at taking a last farewell : one only consolation I can derive from the solemn visit, will be from beholding the youth I had fondly hoped would have lived a credit to his country, die an honour to himself.

Then

Then farewell, my William, till we meet again; should it not be here, it will shortly be; for I feel something within me which gives me the joyful tidings that I shall shortly be with my father that is in heaven, where, to be united to my adopted Lesley, will add to its joys.

M. HOWARD.

LETTER XL.

LORD VERNON TO SIR HENRY DORSET.

YOUR letter found me in a humour to comply with the advice it contained; or, to speak more correctly, the threat;—for was I not expressly told I must either save the life of the condemned Lesley, or lose—oh, intolerable to think! the acquaintance of Sir Henry Dorset; who, if I had never known, I should have had no cause to regret, unless there is any honour in having been the companion of the most unprincipled libertine in all created space. And didst really think, Harry, I was to be frightened by your blustering, into the doing an action repugnant to my feelings? if you did, you was deceived: yes, on my honour you was; for I know you

too

too well. I am not to be frightened with false fire—so no more assuming, lest I threaten in my turn, and fulfil my threats, too, by shaking off the acquaintance of a man, who, taking advantage of the perplexed situation of his friend, forgets his wonted submissive stile, and turns dictator. But enough of this—I only meant to shew you I was not so humbled by the infernal turn my affairs have taken, as you imagined, though, God knows, I am humble enough, for I am used worse than a dog. I cannot go into the street but I am the jest of every apple woman and link boy I meet ; and were I to stay at home till doomsday, not a soul would call on me ! Yet, why all this is, curse me if I can tell ; for, upon my soul, all the reports of my having tricked Lady Vernon into a marriage, and of my having combined with her aunt to hang this fellow, are false.

A good

A good joke, faith ! Tricked a country girl, without a shilling, into being my lady, with thirty thousands a year ! And how the devil should I combine with any one to hang him ? I have nothing to do with Colonel Conway ; and, as to the other jackanapes, he has my permission to destroy the whole generation, root and branch. I wish, from my soul, he had done so twelve months ago, I should then have had nothing to do with the precious bargain I have since made : yet, why am I to be hissed by the lower, and shunned by the upper ranks of people I cannot devise. I am not the first man who has had a frail wife ; why then should I be the first to be punished for it ! Fore gad, I am almost tempted to turn—what can I turn, Harry, to be revenged of those impertinents who have presumed to treat me with insolence ? I can think of no turn I can take that must not be for the better, for I have hitherto given the lie to the proverb,
that

that there is no general rule without an exception; as I never in my life neglected an opportunity of doing all the mischief in my power. More than this I cannot do; therefore vengeance is out of my reach: surprise them I certainly could, and I am not certain I shall not.

What think you of my reforming? leading a new life, and becoming an honest man? Would not this astonish all who ever heard my name? it certainly would: and I have a great mind to treat them with a part of matrimony (which, you know; oh, no, you do not know!) but I can tell you, ends with amazement.

Now, Harry, if my present inclination should last, and I really become virtuous, and godly given, I must renounce your acquaintance, for nobody will believe me either honest or sober while I associate with such a notorious sinner as you are known

known to be ; so I am sure you will not be among those who will have reason either to pray for, or return thanks for my conversion. But I told you, at the commencement of this letter, that your's found me in a humour to take the advice it contained. I will now tell you from whence that change in my disposition, for a very great one it was, arose.

I yesterday morning made a visit to the Countess of N—— ; but now, mind me, Dorset ! I went not thither to cabal against Lesley, or from fondness for her company : the law had determined his fate already ; but I went to her because I was weary of myself, for I was in such a situation that I found I must not go abroad, and I felt I could not stay at home. This was the first moment of my life that I ever coveted a good character, or experienced inconvenience from a bad one. I now did both ; and, somehow or other,
fell

fell into reflection on my past life : the retrospect added to the ill-humour I was in ; for the picture it presented was of so dark an aspect, and so deformed in all its parts, that I shuddered at the view ; and, with a design of flying from it, or rather from myself, I hurried to my library, and seizing on a book, I flung myself on a sofa, and opened it ; when the first words that caught my eyes were these : “ there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance ; ” struck with the encouragement they held out I examined the book, and found it was a bible ; the first I verily believe that was ever opened by me ; and how it came into any apartment of mine, they that put it there know, for I do not. But I conclude it must have been in my great grand father’s time, who, I have heard, was a pious man, since which I fancy it has enjoyed its station unmolested, very possibly with
many

many others of the same date, and similar doctrine: for, as I have kept a library merely as an appendage to my house, I never attended to more than the outside of its contents. I was now, however, so pleased with my discovery, that I turned over several pages; all seemed good, but none so applicable to me as the sentence I have quoted. I therefore restored it to its old habitation, and a second time in my life ventured to converse with myself. I began by resolving to give the geniuses above a holiday, and was myself partaking of their joy, which was heightened by the idea of the vexation and astonishment you, with the rest of your fraternity, would feel on hearing of my conversion, when the unlucky recollection that I must not only live honest in future, but be contrite for the past, startled me, and set me once more to take a view of its transactions, some of which appeared to me of such magnitude, that I conceived no
repentance

repentance ever could atone for them. Others were in the catalogue, which, though of an evil nature, had afforded me such transcendant pleasure in the acting, that I found I could not, for my soul, repent of them ; so I fairly gave it up, or at least, postponed the work of reformation, and in so doing, I thought I acted for the best, for I considered, if I proceeded I must either be an hypocrite, and play at hide and seek with heaven, by pretending a contrition which I did not feel, or in repenting of one sin, commit another. For is not ingratitude a sin? and would it not be ingratitude to find fault with circumstances which gave me complete happiness, at least for a time? besides, my situation is something like Macbeth's ; " I am in folly steeped so far, that should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er."

But I have digressed most intolerably from my subject, and 'tis high time I should return to it. I think I was telling you of a visit I had made the Countess of N——, who I found at home, and happy to see me, I believe from the self same reason that led me to her, (want of better company.) We had not been long together when the door of the apartment we were in was suddenly burst open, and Lady Vernon rushed into the room! The disorder of her dress, and wildness of her appearance, with her unexpected intrusion, astonished us too much to enquire the cause of it.

She paused for a moment, seemingly uncertain of where she was; till, casting her eyes upon her aunt, she darted towards her, who was making the best of her way out of an opposite door, and, catching her arm, arrested her flight; when, taking a long sharp pointed knife from her bosom,

bosom, she was on the brink of striking it into her prisoner, had not the entrance of Mrs. Paulet, who had pursued her, prevented her executing her purpose, by seizing the uplifted arm, which held the weapon. Her back was to Mrs. Paulet; she turned her head, fire flashing from her eyes, in search of the cause of her detention: but the instant she saw who it was, all her fury vanished, and releasing her intended victim, who fell to the ground, overwhelmed with terror, threw herself into the arms of her friend, and hiding her face in her bosom, wept aloud.

The affrighted Countess somewhat recovered, arose and fled: had I possessed power, I had done so too; but my joints were stiffened; I seemed rooted to the spot where I stood. The noise the Countess made, roused Lady Vernon; she gazed wildly round her for some time, at last, observing me, she came

H 2 towards

towards me with a hasty step. My limbs became relaxed; in a second I shook from head to foot; I thought nothing could save me, and I fancied I already felt the horrid knife in my heart, though I had seen Mrs. Paulet secure it. When she had got quite close to me, she looked with wonderful earnestness in my face, till, at length, she burst into a violent fit of laughter. I did not join in her mirth, for I thought it no laughing matter to be so cursedly terrified as I had been. But, somewhat encouraged by her good humour, I ventured to ask her if she thought this proper conduct?

At the sound of my voice she started, and turning from me with a look of horror, she hurried back to her friend, holding her spread hand over her eyes, as if to shut out something that shocked her sight.

I now

I now called to Mrs. Paulet to tell me if she knew what this extraordinary behaviour meant? to which she replied, "Alas! my lord, she is mad! wild as the winds! She knows not what she does! You, and your infernal accomplice, have, by your arts, doomed the unhappy Lesley to death, and driven my wretched friend to madness."

At the sound of Lesley's name, Lady Vernon withdrew the hand which covered her eyes, and, with the most animated countenance I ever beheld, eagerly looked round the room; then going to the door, she stood in the attitude of listening for a moment: at length, turning from it, she pronounced, in a voice which bespoke disappointment, "He is not there!" and, after a pause, solemnly shaking her head, she added, "nor shall I ever see him more!—he is cold in his grave!—they have murdered him!—my aunt and

Lord Vernon did it—I saw them—yet he never did them wrong. Poor William!—it was a pitiable fight! they mangled him shockingly! but he is dead—and he is happy! his heart is not hot like mine! his bosom is not on fire!”

Her looks now became wild, and her voice loud and menacing; but her words too incoherent and confused to be intelligible; her whole frame was disturbed. She continued in this distracted manner till her strength was entirely exhausted, when she sunk into the arms of one of the men who held her, in such a state that I concluded her dead. After some time, she opened her eyes, but did not seem sensible, and in this situation was conveyed to Mrs. Paulet's.

I returned home ten times more miserable than I set out; for devil take me if I could help being sorry to see so fine a woman

man in this confounded way. If I did not think I should be the object of your ridicule while I lived, I would tell you the wonderful effect this scene had on me ! I would leave you to guess, but I am sure you would never hit it. What think you of my having wept ? upon my soul, Harry, it is true ; “ howbeit, unused to the melting mood,” I became an infant ! Water ran down my cheeks—a thing that never happened to me in my whole life before, nor ever shall again. The very recollection has produced as wonderful and as novel an effect ; it has brought a blush upon my cheek ! Oh, Dorset ! what is your poor friend come to !—is he not a Driveller !—he weeps and blushes !—The first he verily thought he could never arrive to, and the second he concluded he was past—at least he hoped no action of his own, could produce so formidable a witness of his guilt. How would my good uncle, the prelate, rejoice in

the tokens I have given of my being a man, for he believes no one can be such who does not occasionally give such proofs of his manhood.

When I had a little composed myself, I opened your letter, which, insolent as it was, gave me pleasure ; for it pointed out to me a method of doing what I now wished to do, but could devise no means, that was to save the life of my rival ; and I instantly set about it, by waiting on the minister to ask his advice how to proceed.

On my way thither, I called on the Countess to inform her of my intention : I found her a good deal humbled by her late escape, notwithstanding which she violently opposed my project ; but, finding I was immoveable, she entreated I would render myself as little conspicuous in the business as possible ; and the best way to avoid this would be to have the
pardon,

pardon, if I obtained one, sent to her, and she would, to save me from the ridicule of the man who had robbed me of my honour, be the bearer of it to him, and teach him to believe it had been procured by her, which part of her advice I approved. I now waited on the minister, who, as soon as he heard my business, assured me I should find no difficulty in obtaining my request, as his Majesty had greatly commiserated the unfortunate gentleman, and would readily grasp at any pretence to save his life: he further added, I need only present my petition, and he would take care of the rest.

He instantly gave me a form, which I copied and signed, and I am to present it this day; but as your servant is just setting out on his return to you, I shall make him the bearer of this, that you may lose no time in making my genero-

sity public, and I shall give you the result of my visit to St. James's by the post; till when I am, as I ever was, and ever shall be, your superior and leader,

VERNON.

LETTER

LETTER XLI.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

WELL, the business is settled—my lady's champion does not exhibit in public this time, and I am the prince of good fellows; even his Majesty condescended to compliment me on my good nature: I don't like that phrase, but as it came from the lips of royalty—from the man who can do no wrong, I must be content. Yet, it was a vile phrase.—A Good Natured Man! Am I a Good Natured Man, Harry! If I am, I am the thing on all this earth I despise most; but let me see how I have obtained this name: I have saved the life of a fellow creature!—Well, that's a noble action! but who was
H 6 this

this fellow creature, and what had he done to merit the gallows, and my compassion? —why, he had murdered two, for aught I know or care, worthy gentlemen; and his interest with me arose from his having done me the honour of conferring on me the title of ———, I leave you to fill up the blank: but I am a Good Natured Man!—Yes, yes; the head of the nation was right; I certainly am a Good Natured Lord, and a Good Natured ———, the blank is again at your disposal. Well, but I must tell you, that my gracious Master was not at first very good natured, for he refused to see me; and when I entreated to know at what time I might be indulged with an audience, I was informed his Majesty could appoint no time, but that I might leave my business with the lord in waiting, who would lay it before the Sovereign, and return me his pleasure. I thanked the noble bearer of this polite
message,

message, but informed him I should not make use of him on this occasion.

I was returning home, having made up my mind to let the devil or the gallows take Mr. Lesley, and all those in his interest, when I met the minister, who prevailed on the *good natured fellow* to return to the place where he had just been every thing but kicked from. He was immediately admitted, and I cooled my heels in an anti-chamber, while he made my peace by making known my business, when I was most graciously received, had my boon granted, and was complimented on my good nature. There was honour and happiness conferred in a breath! Have I not enough to be proud of?

Having finished this mighty affair, I took the opportunity to inform his Majesty of my intention to make the tour of Europe, and so concluded my audience
by

by bidding adieu to his Kingly eye. After acquainting my assistant in this affair of my wish, that the Countess of N—— might be the bearer of mercy to the culprit, I returned home and gave orders to my domestics to be in readiness to depart for France this night.

I shall conclude this letter by bidding you and all England farewell! From the latter, I part without regret, for it has used me ill, and so have you: but I am not much surpris'd at your seizing any opportunity that offer'd to make people believe your principles good enough to lead you to reprobate my conduct, or that you were sufficiently intimate with me to presume to censure it: and I doubt not but you will take all the merit of having saved this fellow from the gallows—be it so. You will not be the first miscreant who has robbed his master—so go on: steal as
many

many of my well-earned laurels as you please.

I trust I am going into countries where I shall weave a fresh garland for my brows: eternal curses on that sentence! It has brought to my recollection a thousand tormenting thoughts—my wife and her paramour are among them—they have garnished my brows. Oh, Dorset! I cannot be patient when I reflect on that! to be the scoff of fools! “and boys shall hoot the cuckold as he passes.” Is it not so? aye, you will say; and many a poor fellow your lordship has graced with that title! Is not retaliation fair play? ’Tis true, Harry; at least the first part, to some with justice, but to many more who never deserved it. We (I mean you and I) never killed any man in defending our favourite’s reputation: we may have fought with some for doubting our success; poor things! how many of them
have

have been brought to our net, by our having, an age before, made the world believe they were in our cage. Well, it is wonderful to think how easily a woman may be robbed of her reputation! I recollect one whose husband was abroad, and whose fame I utterly ruined by only ordering my carriage, whenever I made her a visit, to set me down at a milliner's that was just opposite to her house, and wait there till I returned, saying, I had business in the next street; and, affecting to look cautiously about me to see there was no observers, I stole to her door and knocked with a gentle tap.

This was sufficient; the milliner and my servants thought I wished to conceal my visits; they therefore took special care to make them public, with many more mysterious circumstances that had not taken place. She was a beautiful,
accomplished

accomplished woman, therefore no mercy could be shewn her.

Some damned good-natured friend (as Sir Fretful in the play says) wrote an account of all he had heard, to her husband, who, it seems, received the kind letter just as he was going to lead his men into battle, where, being too much elated by the supposed new honours he had received, to act with prudence, he needlessly exposed himself to the enemy's fire, and received a wound of which he expired a few hours after; having first, in an affectionate letter, acquainted his wife with the motive for his conduct, and upbraided her with her perfidy.

I now expected to reap the harvest of my contrivance; but the poor soul turned sulky, and hid herself in a cottage in Wales, where I have lately heard she died of a broken heart; and the old woman
she

she lived with, from whom I had the story, declared she had never seen her so cheerful as an hour before she expired, and that the reason she gave was, that she was going to clear her innocence to her dear Grenville. A romantic simpleton!

There was another high-minded lady, whose scorn I repaid pretty handsomely; but you shall have the story. Her husband and I were intimate: on our first acquaintance, I found him a mere domestic man, always at his wife's elbow. This was not a favourable situation for me to whisper my tender things, so I contrived by degrees to draw him thence, getting him to the opera, and home with me to supper afterwards: at length he accompanied me to White's, where, from being a looker-on, he took an active part; and, to do him justice, he was an apt scholar, though he paid liberally for his instruction. When I had once seen him engaged,

engaged, I left him to the care of others, thinking it but just that I should give her my company, as I had deprived her of his.

I went on for a long time, sighing, trembling, and gazing, but to no purpose. I might more successfully have encountered an ice island, as she had all its coldness, but the devil a bit of its melting quality. I have many times seen her (after I had been hours practising every art to please her, without obtaining a smile) fly with transport to welcome her ungrateful husband, who had returned home because he had left all his money with the company he had been in, or else the company had left him. A long time I bore this, but I was not then so good natured as I am now; so at last I resolved to be revenged: the means were difficult—for, somehow or other, this woman's life had been too insipid to make her
either

either feared or envied; so scandal would have nothing to do with her; for, you know, she always takes her origin from malice, and malice she had not qualities to provoke.

Thus driven from my strongest hold, I was obliged to change my plan. I accordingly wrote my friend (you will understand this was the gentleman, for with the lady's friendship I was not honoured) an anonymous letter, informing him of my attachment to his wife, and of my frequent visits when he was from home, and my corresponding with her by letter. I did not spare to blacken my own character: I represented myself as an unprincipled villain, who had enticed him into vice and folly abroad, that I might unmolested ruin his peace and honour at home. I concluded with censuring his wife's levity, which I hoped had not arisen from depravity

vity of heart, so much as from his imprudent and negligent conduct.

My success was equal to my wishes, for in two days I heard he had removed prudish madam into the country, where I have the satisfaction to know they live gloriously miserable. So you see, Harry, the pretty souls had better take care how they offend me. Yet, my schemes have not been always attended with the success they merit, as you shall hear.

I had, in one of my country excursions, made acquaintance with a plain, blunt kind of man, who had a pretty, merry, innocent looking woman for his wife; they were people to whom fortune had not dispensed her favours with a liberal hand. I therefore concluded I might save myself the fatigue of courtship, by complimenting the lady with a sum of money; for which I did not doubt but she

she would grant me personal security. As I thought ceremony was not necessary with such poor devils, I took an opportunity of lending the husband one of my horses, that I might be in no danger of interruption from him; not that I supposed he was to be a stranger to what passed, for I imagined, as I meant to be generous, his rib would communicate the good fortune to him, which I had not an idea other than his being rejoiced at. I therefore made my visit, and after telling the lady that nature had been very bountiful, but that fortune had been unjust to her; with a few other common place speeches, I presented her with a bank note for five hundred pounds: she gazed at it, and then at me in silent amazement; at length, bursting into tears, she raised her eyes to the ceiling, and begged God to repay me for this generosity to two beings whom it would enable to live in future with comfort.

I told

I told her that was a trifle; that she should be welcome to larger sums whenever her occasions required. She sobbed out, this was amply sufficient, as it would enable them to pay off the mortgage on a little estate they had, which would satisfy all their desires. "But," she continued, "never, never sir, can we repay this load of obligation." I told her (laughing) she could repay it that moment: it was sometime before I could make her understand my meaning. When she did, I was astonished in my turn; for she surveyed me from head to foot, with a countenance of the most intolerable contempt: uttering at the same time,

"Poor paltry villain!—is this your generosity? Get from my sight, lest I forget what is due to myself, by giving vent to the rage which swells my heart." Finding I did not move, she proceeded: "Are you not gone, vilest of reptiles!"

Take

Take with you your intended bribe, and be less liberal of your purchases in future, lest you leave yourself destitute of the only thing in which you are superior to any other villain who makes rapine and murder his business."

So saying, she flew out of the room, looking more like a Medusa than a woman. As I was not certain but she might return and inflict bodily chastisement, I hastily decamped, and was very well pleased to find myself out of the reach of her nails. I soon recollected I had forgot, in my hurry, to take the note from the floor, where she had indignantly thrown it. This vexed me, as I conceived she would consider it as her lawful property, and I hated her too much to like the thought of her benefiting by me: but had it been five times the sum, it would not have tempted me to the chance of again encountering such a vixen.

vixen. So I comforted myself by recollecting it was not the first five hundred I had spent like a fool, and thought no more of it.

I was not quite so easy as to what part the husband of this virago might take in the affair; for I conceived if he possessed but half the spirit of the weaker vessel, with the proportion of strength his porter-like frame promised, I should stand a very poor chance. The thought of what to-morrow might produce, made that night rather unpleasant: Mr. Morpheus, however, paid me a visit in the morning, from whose embraces I was roused by my valet's informing me Mr. Harvey was below, and would not be denied seeing me on particular business.

The very sound of his name made my bones ache, but I considered I must see him some time or other, and it might be

as well now; besides, my being in bed at a later hour than usual, would afford me a pretence of illness, and that, an opportunity of discussing the matter, which I thought one or two five hundreds more might possibly bring to an amicable adjustment: for I could not persuade myself but poverty was the greatest evil a man could labour under. I therefore desired he might be informed I was very ill, extremely ill; but that I should be happy to see him, if he would excuse my receiving him in bed: and, a moment after, he bounced into my room, vociferating, "I fancy, my lord, I can cure your malady! I have the recipe in my fingers."

My eye instinctively dropped on his hand, in which I perceived a clumsy oak stick. I shook the whole bed with my trembling: he approached, and thrusting a bit of dirty looking rumpled paper to me, he said, "There it is, safe and sound;

found ; my wife would have had me send it last night, but I thought it was better your lordship should pass one anxious night, than run the hazard of losing such a sum by my imprudence in trusting it with a servant."

I now had the courage to take the paper, which was the note I had, in my confusion, left on the floor at his house : my alarm did not subside at sight of it, as I could not conjecture what was to follow ; but, before I asked any questions, I ordered my valet to take the gentleman's hat and stick ; which, to my infinite satisfaction, he carried with him out of the room. I then ventured, in a faltering voice, to beg an explanation ? to which he replied,

"On my return home last night, Mrs. Harvey put that paper into my hand, which, she said, you had dropped while

sitting with her ; but supposing it to be a bit of useless paper, she had taken no notice of it till after your departure, when she discovered its value." Then, laughing in a manner which shewed the amazing strength of his frame, he continued : " I knew I should prove a good physician ! your lordship's looks are mended already."

This I could easily conceive to be the case, for the alteration in my feelings were very great indeed, though the cause assigned had no share in it : yet, his believing so, shewed me how great a value he would have set on such an acquirement. He now took his leave, desiring, if he or his wife could be of any service during my illness, I would command them.

I could not but reflect with astonishment on the past occurrence. I had, till this moment, considered honesty and poverty united, as incompatible ; here was a positive

tive proof to the contrary: for nothing but honesty could make him restore what he imagined I never could be certain I had lost in his house ; and from the very circumstance of my having taken so little care to preserve it, he had a right to suppose I had not attended to the number, by which alone I could have claimed it as mine. Had this even been the case, and he had been known to possess it, neither shame nor punishment awaited the discovery, as he could not restore that which he was not supposed to be the owner of. Yet, with all these circumstances in his favour, and poverty to back them, he resisted the temptation, without any reward in view ; for he did not appear to think he had done any thing out of the common way.

There was something in this I could not comprehend ; and then the conduct of his vixen was altogether as strange.

Her pride had spurned at my offer—her spirit was above making use of what fortune had thrown in her power: yet, she had subdued her pride, concealed her resentment, and neglected the only means she possessed of revenging the offence I had given her: for that she had been entirely silent to her husband on the subject, was plain. In short, the more I endeavoured to conjecture the motive which had actuated these out-of-the-way mortals, the more mysterious every part of their conduct appeared; so I thought I would e'en leave it to those famous developers of mysteries—time or accident.

Now that I had nothing to dread from the oak stick, or the nervous arm that carried it, my pride began to remind me of the indignities I had received from the fury of his wife. To be rejected by a little ignorant rustic; to be insulted for offers that ought to have made her vain;

to

to have a booby of a fellow, that was not worth a guinea, and to whom she had been married seven years, preferred before me, was not to be borne, and I determined to be revenged.

I recollected my former scheme of the anonymous letter; and to set this vixen and her darling at variance, was the wish of my soul. I therefore contrived a plan to lodge suspicions in his bosom, and likewise to spread the same through the neighbourhood, which could easily be done, as I had only to caution my servants, if they heard any reports detrimental to Mrs. Harvey's conduct with me, to contradict them, they being entirely false. This I well knew, from experience, would be sufficient to ruin the character of a princess.

To execute my schemes with more certainty, I went not near the house of

my intended victim for several days, though I constantly threw myself in the husband's way, lest he should think me prevented by illness. At length, he asked me why they had not seen me as usual? This was what I wanted: I affected to be confused, and stammered and hesitated: the man stared!—at length I said, “My dear sir, I see you are quite astonished at my embarrassment; you have reason: but as your question was unexpected, I had hoped I might have escaped this painful explanation: as I cannot, I trust the goodness of my motive will justify the conduct of which you complain.”

The poor fellow seemed lost in wonder, and the following dialogue passed between us, which I shall give you, without the—he said, and I said—which I detest. I proceeded, saying, it was with infinite regret I discovered that reports, detrimental to the fame of your wife, were
gone

gone abroad ; as to myself I was indifferent ; I knew the censure of such beings could not affect me ; I was above their reach ; but to Mrs. H. her good name was of consequence : besides, I foresaw your peace would fall a sacrifice to malignant tongues ; “ For Cæsar’s wife must not even be suspected.”

Here his patience would hold no longer ; he interrupted me with “ What the devil do they say ? ” “ Be not alarmed, my good sir ; you may depend on my honour.” “ No more flourishes, my lord ! truth needs no ornament—come to the point.” “ Why then, if you insist, I must comply : my frequent visits at your house have been noticed, and the envious observers have placed them to the account of your wife, whose attachment to me they pretend to have discovered by some unlucky accident. But let not such idle reports disturb your tranquillity : I shall

leave the place in a few days ; in the mean time I shall avoid Mrs. Harvey ; and if (which I am certain is not the case) she ever thought more favourable of me than I deserved, she will forget—but why do I say forget ; she never remembered me but as your friend. No, sir ; you may make yourself very happy, she has no particular regard for me ; upon my honour I speak the truth.” “ Upon my soul I believe your lordship.” “ You make me happy beyond measure ; I feared you would have given into the too general opinion ; but you are a prudent man, Mr. H, and deserve the heart you possess ; for I can assure you your lady prefers you to all mankind.” “ As to that I don't know ; she never told me she did ; but she has often told me, of all mankind she liked your lordship the least.” “ Oh, my good sir, do not let her not having informed you of her astonishing affection make you uneasy ; women never speak their real sentiments

sentiments to their husbands. So she dislikes me ! I am very glad of it indeed, extremely glad : this must make you quite easy, and indeed you have no reason to be otherwise ; I hope you know me too well to think I would deceive you." " Yes, my lord, I know you well enough to satisfy me of my wife's innocence ; for I am well assured your lordship is too much a man of honour, to tell a falshood in vindication of any woman's character ! No ; the unthinking wretch, who, to oblige you, forfeits her inward peace, and probably her hope of happiness hereafter, must not expect your lordship to countenance or conceal her wickedness and folly ! You are too just to let her pass on the world for what she is not , for, in that case, she might see and repent her error ; and instead of the punishment her criminal affection for you had merited, she might live respected by her friends, and die lamented by her connections. Even the

1 6 husband

husband who had been injured, to convince you of her unlimited regard, might, from your cruel silence, be so imposed on as to sleep in peace, and press his too feeling partner to his contented bosom ; “ for he that is robbed, not knowing what is stolen, let him not know it, and he is not robbed at all : ” so, my lord, when you vouch for any woman’s virtue, I shall think myself bound to believe it, as I am convinced that is not the side you will be found to be a rascal or a liar on : and, to prevent your lordship’s having any uneasiness on my account, I assure you I am perfectly satisfied with my wife’s affection and conduct ; and any scoundrel who dares to hint a word to the prejudice of either, shall feel, were he a lord, the weight of this good stick, while he had a bone in his worthless carcase.”

With these pleasant words, he grasped the club in his Patagonian fist, and gave
me

me a look that almost turned me to a statue. At last I aimed at an air of indifference, and got out "Faith, Mr. Harvey, you are right; it is the only way to stop people's tongues. Yes, you are certainly right, so I wish you a good morning: should you come to town, you will not forget Lord Vernon will be rejoiced to see you."

He grinned horridly a ghastly smile; and ground out between his teeth, "Oh, your most obedient, sir! I shall not forget Lord Vernon, or his intended kindness; they will afford me and my poor Louisa subjects for laughter while we live."

I waited for no more, but hurried home, cursing my stars that had exposed me to the contempt and insult of a little country vixen, and the Colossæan plebeian her husband, of whom, to this hour, I cannot
(though

(though I hate them both most heartily,) think without a sensation that is amazingly like respect; and, in endeavouring to get rid of the ridiculous idea, a more unpleasant one succeeds it: it is contempt for a certain lord of your acquaintance; but whether it arises from his having attempted, or his not having succeeded in the business he undertook, I cannot exactly determine—you, probably, may be more sagacious.

These anecdotes I know will divert you, as they are new, and what is better, they shew you I have had my mortifications—mortifications I have been careful to conceal from motives of policy: for nothing lessens a man in the estimation of one woman equal to his having been rejected by another; besides, it might have lessened your, and many of our fraternity's, respect for me, as your admiration was obtained by my making you believe I was
more

more successful in vice than yourselves : nor should I now have undeceived you, were I not going where your allegiance will be of no further use to me, and I thought any thing new would keep me alive in your memories, till I could supply you with my travelling anecdotes.

I am informed every thing is in readiness for my departure, and that they only wait for me ; so adieu, Harry ! and hey for France ! Remember me to all the choice spirits of your club ; tell them if I retain a remembrance of any thing England contains, it shall be them ; but that I mean to take a large draught of the waters of Lethe, in which I hope to drown (I was going to say) all the inhabitants of Britain : but I know not why it is, something came across me, and I felt a wish to spare you ; probably it was dictated by the certainty I was the only human being who would not be desirous
to

to forget you. Perhaps you might with justice, and without an exception, return me the compliment; for in truth I do not think we have ever played the hypocrite, or the sycophant. We have defied the devil and all his works; we have mostly travelled the road of iniquity together; and though I have sometimes soared above you, yet you have always shewn such an earnest desire to keep pace with me, that I have preferred you to the highest post in my regard, where thou shalt remain till either thou or I wish to obtain a good name; we must then, of course, forego each other's acquaintance: till which I fancy distant day, I shall continue to communicate with thee, and subscribe myself thy friend and leader,

VERNON.

LETTER

LETTER XLII.

THE HONOURABLE CHARLES MACKENZIE,
TO THE EARL OF D——.

My honoured Lord and Father,

I EMBRACE the opportunity a few melancholy hours of leisure afford me, of giving you the particulars which have occurred since my leaving town, to perform the ungrateful office of making the fate of my friend known to his unhappy father.

On my reaching his house, I was informed by the domestics their master never admitted any person whatever to
his

his conversation, and that I must communicate my business by letter. I accordingly wrote to him, informing him I came from his son, who had desired me to request a personal interview, that I might make him acquainted with some disastrous events which had taken place, and which it was necessary to make known to him immediately, as the smallest delay might prevent the only happiness that the ill-fated William could now enjoy.

I waited while the servant carried the note to his master ; he soon returned, desiring I would follow him : he then conducted me through several apartments ; at length, opening a door, he bid me enter, and left me. The gloomy appearance of the room from which the light was nearly excluded, struck me, at my entrance, and added to the solemnity, or, to speak more justly, the something-like terror which oppressed my heart. I
paused,

paused, unwilling to proceed, till I was accosted by a tall, meagre figure, who, rising from his seat, came towards me ; his brow was clouded, and his look severe, (this was the first time I had seen Mr. Lesley, notwithstanding he had written to me several times on his son's concerns ;) in an accent, harsh and commanding, he demanded,

“ Who are you, sir ? and what is the business by which you have forced yourself upon my solitude ? This paper tells me you are the harbinger of woe !—if so, speak ; suspense is the only torment I have not learned to bear.”

There was something in his manner and expressions which filled me with an awe, a reverence, a something I cannot describe : I could not give utterance to my words, till a flood of tears came to my assistance. He led me to a seat, and placed

placed himself by my side ; he at length, with the same stern voice and aspect, addressed me in the following words :

“ Young gentleman, to what am I to impute this conduct ? Does it arise from your own distress, or is it occasioned by the fear of mine ? If the latter, it is unnecessary : I am no novice in affliction—one and twenty years have gone their annual course since I have slept in peace—since misery and I have been companions—since I have known the comfort of forgetfulness ! Therefore proceed ; I fearless bare my bosom to the shaft, even should it be pointed with my William’s blood !”

My tears gushed afresh ; he looked earnestly in my face for a moment, then continued : “ It is even so ; my boy is dead ! Now fate I defy you ! I am beyond your reach ! He was the only comfort

fort you had left me—you have robbed me of him, and now I owe you nothing.”

Then taking my hand, he said, in a softened tone, “ Sir, be comforted ; we all must die ; but tell me, how fell my boy ? was it by the visitation of heaven ? or did he hasten it by any rashness of his own ? Speak, sir ; be composed.”

I told him his son was yet alive, but in the hands of justice, to whose stern decrees he was shortly to yield his life. He pressed the hand he still held with increased fervour, till I had proceeded thus far ; the pressure then lessened by degrees, and he sunk back in his chair. I called for assistance ; and after some time he recovered, when he waved his hand to the servant, who instantly retired. He now, if I may be allowed the expression, fixed his eyes on vacancy, for he looked on nothing, though he gazed intently.

Shocked

Shocked at this silent stupefaction, I begged him to be comforted: he started at the sound of my voice, and sternly demanded, From what source was he to derive comfort? Was it from the destruction of his heart-cherished hopes? Was it from the ignominious death of a darling son? And, with an angry countenance, he continued:

“ You, who preach comfort, have driven it for ever from me!—you have plunged a dagger in my heart, and now you chide because it bleeds! I am a man, sir; and I feel as a man;—as one whom calamity has driven to despair! His death I could have borne—you saw I could: I knew it was a debt we must all pay, and he who gave him had a right to call him hence, without my questioning his justice. But why—why, O God! hath thy vengeance fallen on his head? Could you not have spared the son, and
exhausted

exhausted all your bolts upon the father? Have I murmured at your unrelenting chastisements? Have I asked mercy for myself? No; I have submitted to thy hard decrees; I have patiently endured a life of misery—of misery I had not merited, and only asked that you would bless my child; that you would give that compassion to him, that you had withheld from his father! And is it thus my petition is granted? Is it thus the Prince of Peace heals the wounds he has inflicted? Oh, tell me, thou universal Comforter! why am I alone exempted from thy mercy—from thy justice! How have I deserved thy anger? Tell me, my God! why hast thou forsaken me!”

His strength was exhausted, and he suffered me to support him to his seat. After a few minutes silence, he requested to be informed of the circumstances which led to his son's unhappy fate, which

I com-

I complied with, concealing only what related to the diabolical Countess of N——, as I thought the knowledge of her conduct would enrage, but could not comfort him. He seemed surprised at his son's attachment to Miss Howard, of whom he had not even heard, and to whose family and connections he was a stranger: but recollecting himself, he said, "This is no wonder; for so I am to all the world; probably, had I suffered my son to converse on worldly subjects, I need not at this moment have accused the Almighty of injustice! But, at variance with mankind, I sought to live in ignorance even of their existence; and to obtain this end, have lived secluded from every member of society, except the short intervals in which my unhappy William was released from scholastic attendance; and even those, my preferring his happiness to my own, made me relinquish great part of: for though I had abjured society myself,

myself, I frequently forced him to quit me that he might partake of it: but it is now over:—the treasure on which I doated, is by violence forced from me; and, not content with taking my wealth, it has branded me with dishonour. The usual attendant on poverty is pride; but with my treasure my pride has vanished! I am humbled to the dust, and the only consolation I am capable of, arises from the certainty that the fates have done their worst, and that they retain no further power over me than to kill the miserable, sapless trunk which they have cruelly maimed, by hewing off the branch which promised to shade it from future storms, and of which the nourishing had preserved its existence: but I have done;—the hand of power is stretched forth, and my complaints are useless. I will go to my boy, and endeavour to instil into him that fortitude his wretched father wants.”

I told him I approved of his intentions, and that we had not one hour to lose : he started from his seat and exclaimed,

“ Is it then so sudden ? Great God ! why hast thou steeled the hearts of mankind ! why make them the ministers of thy vengeance ! Was not thy arm sufficient ! Couldst thou not have spoken the word, and we had perished ! But let us go ; let us fly to the dungeon which contains my ruined William, that I may mingle my groans with his before he becomes a martyr to the wrath of heaven.”

I saw any thing I could say would add to, and not assuage, his anguish . I therefore conducted him to my carriage, and we drove in silence. I could not forbear comparing the impatient and repining spirit of this afflicted man, with that of Dr. Howard, from whom I had parted a few hours before ; the difference was
great



great indeed, and shewed me the beauty and value of religion.

The first of these equally unfortunate men (for surely their sorrows may be termed equal) yields himself to despair; he accuses his maker of cruelty, and defies his future vengeance; while the other, calm and resigned, kisses the rod which has chastised him, and kneels in humble supplication for future mercy. His countenance reminded me of a beautiful autumnal evening, which, while its calmness delights, yet makes you sad: he sighs—but it is the sigh of resignation: no murmur—no look of discontent escapes him: he raises his eyes to heaven, and they are brightened by hope. What a contrast to the other, who, like a melancholy winter-day, sits wrapt in an impenetrable gloom, till the brooded storm breaks forth, and, with impetuous rage, expends its strength, and again retires to fullen-

fullness and clouds: if he looks to heaven it is with a threatening aspect; his sighs bespeak discontent and disappointment.

From what, my father, can this amazing difference arise? Is it from nature or education? I cannot but think the latter has in this instance influenced those two men in their conduct: Dr. Howard's was such as befitted the walk in life he was intended for. From his earliest infancy he was instructed to fear, love, and place confidence in that God whose servant he was to be; while Mr. Lesley was taught worldly knowledge; that is, to rely solely on his own industry and abilities for his success in acquiring wealth, which he was led to believe would make him happy; he was warned to shun the paths which led to vice, but those which led to virtue were not pointed out to him. Thus, ignorant of every principle of religion,
he

he was at an early age thrust into the world with one maxim ingrafted on his mind, which was, to look on mankind as knaves and hypocrites: his success at his entrance into life did not answer his expectation; and meeting with some crosses, together with the loss of his wife, and having never been instructed, that disappointments and afflictions were inevitably the lot of man, he retired from the world, having placed my friend, then an infant, and his only child, at a distance from him. In this solitude he lived, never suffering any human being, except one domestic, to approach him; and with him he seldom conversed, and never on any subject but such as his family affairs made indispensable. For the space of eighteen years (the term he has occupied his present dwelling) he has not been known to go beyond a field which surrounds his house; and except his son, who passed his vacations with him, and the

servant I have before mentioned, I was the first human being who had been admitted to his presence: and though doating to idolatry on his son, and giving, with a lavish hand, more than he could ask, yet he was generally silent when they were together; or if they conversed, the subject was taken from books.

These particulars my friend has himself given me of his father, who he loves with the fondest affection. It is not matter of surprise, that a disposition naturally ungente, should, thus excluded from society, grow morose and peevish: his contempt of the world hourly increased, and his son could not so highly offend him, as by speaking of any transaction that had passed, or any individual who inhabited it.

But I must return from my digression; a digression I thought necessary, as I had
heard

heard you frequently express a wish to be informed of the particulars of this extraordinary man's uncommon seclusion from society.

During our journey he seldom spoke, but the perturbation of his mind was very evident, for his whole frame partook of it. On our arrival at Newgate, I ventured to hint how much his distress would afflict my unfortunate friend, and at a time when he had occasion for all his fortitude. He looked fiercely at me, and said,

“ I understand you, sir ; I will endeavour to benefit by your reproof.”

I proposed to go first and prepare his son for the interview, but he followed me into the dungeon. The meeting was such as no pen could do justice to !—here was

another contrast ! The son, unmindful of his own calamity, seemed only anxious for his father's peace : he assured him of his perfect resignation to his fate, and that the only wish of his heart was to see him support it with equal tranquillity. He conjured him to call to his aid that reason which had been given him by a merciful God, to enable him to support the ills of life with patience. Here he was interrupted by his almost frantic parent, who exclaimed,

“ Tell me not of a merciful God ! I know of none—to me he has been unjust and cruel, heaping ruin on my head beyond my strength to bear ! Talk not to me of reason or of patience ! yet, I will be patient ; for have I not cause ? Who can behold that spectacle, and say I have not ? Out of my long wrecked peace, this was the only comfort that was left me !

me! I treasured it in my heart, and looked eagerly forward to the time when my anxiety should be repaid;—and see, it is arrived!—for lo! the object of it stands before me a manacled wretch, who, with to-morrow's sun shall be dragged from his loathsome dungeon, to die upon a scaffold! to be an object for the vulgar multitude to gaze at; to raise their pity, and to be their scorn! There is my cause for patience! such are the proofs of mercy I have received. But I have done, my son: I will be patient; I will play the hypocrite with my tongue; I will say infamy is honour, and cruel injustice, mercy. But my heart will give the lie to my words, and, I trust, will burst with honest indignation at their falsehood."

My distressed friend was overwhelmed by his father's impatience and anguish; he used every method to comfort him; he

he argued, soothed, and persuaded, which obtained nothing but sullen silence. After some time spent in this manner, I left them together: on my return, William proposed my retiring with his father, as, he observed, we both must be in need of rest. Mr. Lesley did not object, I therefore attended him to my lodgings; but before I departed, I in a low voice told my friend, I should return as soon as I had seen his father in bed; he desired I would not, saying, "No, my long loved Charles, to-morrow will be time enough; let your attendance here be early; I could wish you to come before my wretched parent."

I urged to pass the night with him, but he said, "it cannot be;" and added, in the words of Shakspeare's Fifth Harry, on almost as solemn an occasion, "I and my bosom must debate awhile, and then I would no other company."

I felt

I felt the propriety of his motive for wishing my absence too forcibly to be further solicitous, I therefore took my leave ; he pressed my hand to his bosom, and burst into tears. I need not tell my honoured father what anguish oppressed his sorrowing son ; he knows my heart, and the affection it bears this ill-fated youth ; he likewise knows how eminently worthy he is of every good man's regard.

On reaching my lodging, I attended Mr. Lesley to his room, when he requested to be left alone : I thought my stay could be productive of no good, and that I had no right to obtrude myself on his grief ; I therefore withdrew, and threw myself on my bed in the hope that the fatigue I had undergone would force me, for a short time, to forget to-morrow ; but it could not be : sleep flies the agitated

ed mind ; it is like the worldly visitant ; it loves not the abodes of sorrow. Finding darkness and leisure only increased the dread and horror I felt at the idea of what the morning would produce, I arose ; and have employed the intervals in giving you this account, which I shall send off immediately, and the remaining horrid particulars as soon as I am capable of writing, which I fear will not be so soon as you would wish to have them ; for indeed, my father, I am borne down with affliction : how then shall I support the awful, tremendous scene which is to come ! How shall I support the dying pangs of my Lesley ! How shall I support the anguish, the despair of this wretched father, whose agonizing groans at this moment pierce my ear, and shock my inmost soul ! He has passed the night in traversing his chamber ; his hurried and irregular steps hold out no prospect of calmness or resignation.

The

The dawn is breaking ; I must begin my solemn task ; never till this moment did I behold the light of heaven with reluctance : it now fills me with dismay ; all my fortitude has forsaken me ; I am tempted to join my repining partner in affliction in arraigning the justice of heaven, and in questioning its decrees. Yet I will stifle the murmurs of my heart ; I will believe that the mighty giver of life knows what is best for his creatures.

Mr. Lesley has sent to inform me that it is time for us to attend his son, and he is impatient to be gone ; I cannot therefore comply with my friend's desire of seeing me alone.

I hear him coming—farewell, then, my honoured lord and father ! I need not desire, for I know you will grieve
for

for the ruined companion of my youth,
and pity your

Affectionate Son,

CHARLES MACKENZIE.

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